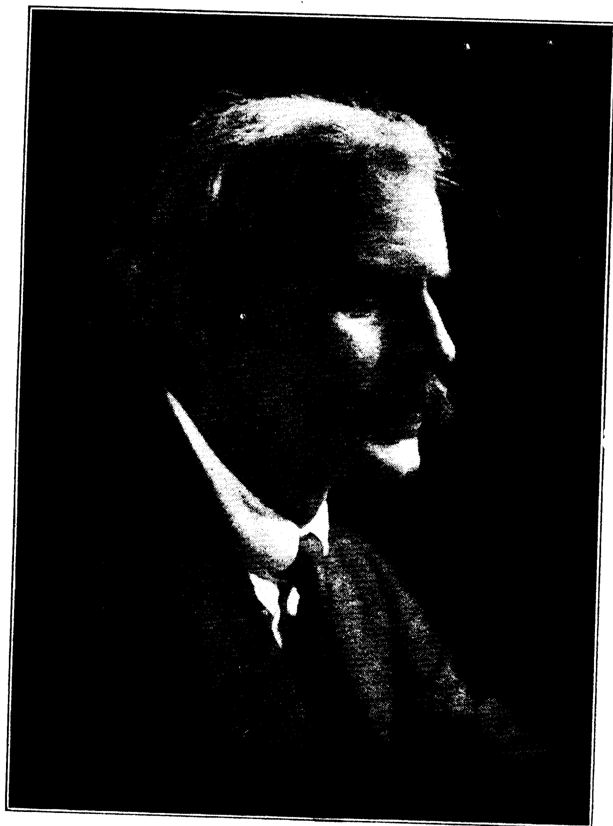
THE MAN OF TO-MORROW

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By

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TO-DAY

"This age will serve to make a very pretty farce for the next if it have the wit to perceive it."
Samuel Butler (Preface to Hudibras).

SUPPOSE a referendum were to be taken to-morrow on the question "Who is the most interesting man in politics?" Those would not lose their money who put James Ramsay MacDonald at the top. A year ago Mr. Lloyd George might have seemed safe. Hardly, to-day. He is, already, beginning to look as though he belonged to the past, if the near past. The Leader of the Opposition has, since November, 1922, riveted the attention of the present. It is a very different sort of attention, no doubt, more serious, less malicious; the audience has turned from double-entendre comedy to straight drama; but it is concentrated upon him, and his party, as once on the Welsh wizard and his two-headed troupe. He has the present. It is also felt that he may have the future, in even greater measure.

The interest is not wholly due to his position. He is the Leader of His Majesty's first Labour Opposition. He may, and that at no very distant

period, be Premier in the first British Labour Government. That is the external aspect. There is also an internal aspect, belonging to the man rather than to his place. At any period during the last ten years Mr. MacDonald would have had a number of "plumpers," even at the time when the Northcliffe and Bottomley press, in season and out of season, were denouncing him as a traitor. They might not have appeared formidable, except in their refusal to transfer their first preferences, but they would have been there. Their allegiance, strengthened by public obloquy, was personal. It derived from and represented a belief in certain qualities in the man himself, qualities which then looked like a barrier to success in the popular sense, and yet, so they would have asserted, heedless of the void in which they seemed to speak, made him sure of a place in history. Anyone who enjoys the devotion of a compact minority is, at least, interesting. He may be a dark horse to the majority, but the majority has to admit in him some positive qualities not yet seen. Something different from the safety of so many who have been erected into leaders of all parties, within our experience, because nobody objected to them too strongly. Many people up to November, 1922, and after, objected very strongly to him. Those who believed in him, however, carried the day. Hence the position. Hence, too, the acute and at times alarmed interest in the man who holds it.

Interest, then, is more or less unanimous. Can one go farther? Probably. There are people who frankly dislike him. There are more who, less frankly, distrust him. There are still more who do not know quite what to think, whose judgment hangs suspended on what he may do. But interest has survived years of extreme unpopularity—of a degree and an intensity only possible when the public mind is fed and moulded by a powerful press—followed by years of obscurity, of removal from the front of the scene. Its underlying explanation is that, without distinction of party, as outside the range of persons who profess any active concern with politics, Ramsay MacDonald is felt to have a special quality. Is it not that queer, unanalysable thing called genius?

Definition does not help here. Rather, indeed, it hinders. To genius the simple mind is more sensitive than the subtle. The subtle insists upon dividing into particles. The simple knows, without much reflection upon the matter, that the whole is more than the sum of its parts; that all sorts of criticisms can be made, all sorts of faults, failures even, registered, and yet something remain more important than they are. He feels that it is there, even while he would find it impossible to say exactly in what it consists.

Nowadays most of us try to be subtle, to see below the surface; we have got inordinately quick in perceiving faults, ingenious in belittlement.

Perhaps that is why genius seems so rare, out of place even and unnatural. Those who claim to express the mind of the age, to interpret common experience for the common folk, sing incessant dirges over the inhuman dearth of noble natures in our time. They are blandly unconscious, most of them, of the element of truth there is in the old saying that beauty is in the eye of the observer. Positively stated that truth may not work; negatively, however, it carries a long way. Ugliness, meanness, a sense that everything and everybody is petty—these things are largely factors of the eye of the observer.

Moreover, we have driven morals out by one door only to let them in by another. The antithesis between character and intellect, which is a commonplace of our writers and teachers, seems to find support in the careers of one or two of the very men in our time who have that curious glamour about them that we would call genius if we were not frightened of every term implying praise.

Future generations will surely note with interest the malign twist to our standards of values given, first and foremost, by Mr. Lloyd George and, in a secondary degree, by President Wilson. The unprincipled cleverness of the one, the high-principled stupidity of the other, have, between them, forced upon vast numbers of people a distrust of idealism. Few perhaps now regard President Wilson as a genius, even as a moral

genius, though millions did, once. Fewer still perhaps recognize that in his case a failure of intellect was a failure of character. But millions now regard the expression of lofty views with distrust, and feel that when a man gets on to the mountain tops it is for the purpose of bamboozling them. The cleverer he is the worse he is. The measure of Mr. Lloyd George's genius was his success in exploiting the simple trust of those who were dazzled by him. The remarkable tributes paid at the time of his resignation to Mr. Bonar Law, and since to his successor, on the simple ground of their "honesty"—i.e., of their goodness—show how far the moral reaction against immoral cleverness has already gone. The "geniuses" of the war period, in our country, were Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. The judgment of their mute contemporaries upon them is expressed in the unwillingness to believe that a man of brains can be a man of character; in the distrust of genius of any sort.

Therefore, to say that J. Ramsay MacDonald has genius does at this moment, with the intelligent, at once connote distrust. It is an adventitious distrust, based not on any knowledge of him, but on the "complex," to use the cant phrase of the hour, that we have most of us got about genius. It is a form of praise that seems to take away with one hand what it gives with the other. It exalts his intellect while suggesting doubts about his character. If only he were

stupid we would be prepared to agree, record or no record, that he might be good. No one can think that he is stupid. Hence a suspicion about his purposes and character, which may or may not be justified, but has really got nothing to do with what is known or believed about him. It is an illegitimate inference from the irresistible and universal recognition of his brains.

Men of genius are always worth study. In the present hour of the world's history no genius demands it so insistently as one whose sphere is that great arena we call the political. Whether we like it or no, ours is a political age, because it is an age of convulsion, upheaval, when the minds of men are torn from their moorings and swept out into uncharted seas by the sheer pressure upon them of facts. For good or evil, fight against it as we may, the war of 1914 dominates, conditions all our experience. Psychologically as well as historically the men and women now alive, throughout the world, are its children. It has left us with new and huge problems—social, economic, moral—which overarch our sky. They colour everything. The men of the study and the workshop, of the factory and the mine, of the studio and the school, are compelled to take note of the livid and threatening thunder clouds that darken their windows. To pursue their quiet work, to go on with their own concerns, without regarding the state of the weather, is impossible. Politics have thrust themselves into

the most sheltered home. Round the Englishman's castle there surges an angry tide that may submerge it. By a tragic paradox he finds himself, at the very moment when his fear and dislike of politicians are most acute, compelled to look to them, as never before, as the men on whom his whole destiny depends. The war saw Tom, Dick, and Harry sacrificed by the politicians: forced to go out, suffer and die in an effort to clear up the messes they had created; the peace made the betrayal more glaring; after the peace the homes their sacrifices defended are still in danger, and, if they are to be saved, it is the politicians who have to save them.

Everyone feels this; the workers in their millions perhaps most keenly of any. Their increased political consciousness is the great outstanding fact in the British history of the last decade. They are looking to Parliament as they have never looked in their history. All that between 1918 and 1922 they hoped of direct, industrial action—and hoped in vain—they now hope of political action. Westminster since 1922 has become the most interesting place in the British Isles: Parliament, which almost disappeared from the newspapers under the Coalition regime, eats up their columns, spreads over the front pages, is the focus of intelligent interest and concern.

This change is directly expressed in the new status of the Labour Party, and the new status of

the Labour Party is very largely the work of J. Ramsay MacDonald. Abroad as well as at home the eyes of men are upon it, in hope and in apprehension. Europe and the United States see it, under his leadership, as the unknown quantity, out of which anything may come. Ibsen a quarter of a century ago saw the working men of Europe as one of the only two possible reservoirs of spiritual and moral refreshment for a generation even then troubled about many things, though with far less cause than ours. The hope he felt then began to take on a body when a Labour Party, forty strong, appeared at Westminster in 1906. From 1906 to 1914 it was a definite and growing force. Even after the war smashed it internally, the little knot of men who stood firm under MacDonald's banner counted for far more than their numbers seemed to warrant. Between 1918 and 1922, however, the hope seemed to decline. The Labour Party was still there; indeed its strength was nearly doubled; with a phalanx of 70 it had a claim, on numbers, to rank as the opposition. It did not so rank, however. In the House of Commons it counted for little; outside its weakness had lamentable reactions.

Why did Parliament fall, during those years, into something very like contempt? Why did Labour, in particular, disappoint the hopes of those who hailed the new constitution of 1918 as removing from it the earlier reproach of being a

class party? The huge Coalition majority may cover the first query; may not the answer to the second be that J. Ramsay MacDonald was out of the House? The more one investigates, the more that conclusion imposes itself. The difference, patent to the least observant, between the status of Labour between 1918 and 1922 and now, is not in its numbers but in its leadership. MacDonald, who has made so much of 140, would have made something of 70. The new personnel is more vigorous and more varied than the old: but the crucial quality, absent in 1918, present now, is leadership.

Moreover, the difference in personnel and in numbers is largely due to him. From 1914 right up to the 1922 election he was constantly at work, building opinion in the country. From the outbreak of war he saw it as his task to keep the platform free. He resigned his leadership of the Labour Party. Only his four Independent Labour Party colleagues stood staunch beside him. At first the odds were overwhelming. The 1918 election looked like complete defeat. He refused to accept it as such. He continued, up and down the country, the work of propaganda. In this the weakness of the parliamentary party was a heavy handicap on a man who stood for parliamentary democracy against Sovietism, direct action, revolution. The tide seemed to be running all the other way. But he did not yield or budge an inch.

He gathered round him a body of men who have since been returned to Westminster and represent a new type of Labour M.P. They differ immensely in association and tradition. Some are ex-Liberals, others the younger reading and thinking type of Trade Unionist, from the mines, the railways, the textiles or the engineering industries. Whether they come from the Clyde or the Tyne, from Yorkshire or from Wales, they agree in being Socialists who believe in Parliament and mean to use it to produce far-reaching social transformation. They came to Westminster fully aware that there was in the party one man who could lead it, and determined that he should do so; one man who had the brains, the ideas, the character, and the patience to carry their aspirations into action, and make of the House of Commons the real centre of national life. They secured his election as Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and since then there has been unanimous agreement as to the rightness of the choice. They knew, in November, 1922, that there was no alternative to MacDonald. To-day that view, were it to be put, would hardly find a dissentient voice. When the press outside tries to suggest that internal differences could split the Party, it is talking through its hat. In any living party there are differences on this tactical issue or that; there are bound to be groups; but on one point the Labour Party is clearly unanimous:

there is only one possible leader. Attempts from outside to suggest that the " Right wing " in the parliamentary party thinks this, and the " Left wing " that, are, on this subject, futile. There never was a leader who pleased every individual at every point: there has seldom been a leader of an advanced party who enjoyed the enthusiastic support of his own followers to the extent to which MacDonald does. His support in the country is even more coherent and definite. It was there before his election as leader; it is stronger and more outspoken now. And it is at least as strong inside the Trade Unions as in the recognizedly political organizations.

Tories and Liberals have for long tried to erect a curious image which they call the " real British working man," to whom there corresponds a " sane " or safe Trade Unionist as acceptable and representative leader. Because MacDonald does not in the least correspond to this fantasy of theirs, they suggest that he is out of touch and has somehow or other been " imposed " upon his followers—presumably by Black Magic. This was the recurring burden of the diatribes of Mr. Lloyd George both in 1918 and in 1922. Not so much is heard of it now. The fact that MacDonald is the chosen leader of the working people and a source of deep pride to their hearts, is rather too obvious. But it lingers in the minds of many middle-class persons, and can hardly be dislodged unless they are prepared to become

acquainted first with the average British working man as he really is, not as he exists in their fancy, and with MacDonald as he really is.

In the average worker there is imprisoned a soul which it is no part of the business of the average Tory or Liberal to understand. This soul is longing and struggling, obscurely, for expression. The cinema and the Sunday paper, betting and even drinking are, in eight cases out of ten, the tragic outlets in which it loses itself. Life in industrial towns, or in the English country-side, is an affair of ugly and crushing monotony. Miserable housing makes home a poor relief from work. The starving spirit, like the frustrated eye and ear, seeks desperately for something different. In a percentage which may be two or may be ten it finds it in politics—in Socialist politics. The appeal of Labour is not rooted in misery so surely as in hope. This hope, with the thoughtful, expresses itself in Socialism. The thinking workman believes that society can be so organized as to make its good things accessible to all; he believes that his own poverty, and that of his class, is unnecessary. Obscurely this belief finds echoes beyond the thoughtful, because it corresponds to that instinct for escape which runs aground in the soul-destroying pleasures copied by the poor from the rich. No one in our time has given to it a form so definite, an expression so inspiring as MacDonald. The gifts of mind which have

raised him from the humblest origin to an equality with those who have had every circumstantial advantage have not separated him from his roots in the life of the multitude, and the multitude know it. He incarnates their aspirations. The feeling that is speechless in them, in him finds voice, and it is a voice that echoes through their hearts.

It is not the workers who resent him as an intellectual; it never has been. If the middle-class man of other parties does so, it is because his unconscious snobbery makes him feel that intellect is a class prerogative. He does not mind if a more or less unlettered Trade Unionist rises to office : he can continue to despise while patronizing him, safe in the belief that his own insolence will not be understood—any more than the insult to the workers implicit in his view of them will be understood. But MacDonald he can neither patronize nor despise. His only way out is to distrust his genuineness: to say that he is unrepresentative.

Naturally few Liberals or Tories, few of MacDonald's middle-class critics, would admit that they distrust an intellectual leader of Labour, on the ground that because he is an intellectual he is therefore out of place in the workers' ranks. To do so would expose their conviction that intellect in its more developed forms is the privilege of their own class. It would show to the workers what the older parties really think

of them. Therefore they have to explain their distrust on another more specious line, not apparently connected with class prejudice.

This takes the form of a sort of apotheosis of our old friend the "strong silent Englishman," the man whose brains may not be either subtle or remarkable, but whose heart is in the right place and whose actions can be forecasted with tolerable accuracy: whose psychology is what is called "normal." As Mr. William Trotter pointed out years ago in his masterly book on Herd Instinct,[1] it is from this normal, insensitive type that our governors are mainly recruited: it provides the "safe" men who are trusted. The results have been disastrous. Mr. Trotter indeed holds that civilization is doomed unless there is far more co-operation by the conscious intellectual type, far more use of it to correct the stupidity of the normal. Nevertheless, middle-class opinion shies at intellect and cries for safety—and finds safety with the "strong silent Englishman." The Englishman in question is often nothing like so strong as he looks; where he is strong his strength resembles brittle cast-iron rather than steel: in nine cases out of ten the cast-iron is only a painted semblance. MacDonald is strong, but neither silent nor an Englishman. His particular instrument—that of public speech—differentiates him sharply from

[1] "The Instinct of the Herd in Peace and War," W. Trotter, Fisher Unwin.

the normal, stupid type and, in itself, has always made that type suspicious.

An orator is a demagogue: an orator must take in first, himself and then his hearers. MacDonald is an orator. Therefore he is a fraud. Put very bluntly that is how the new charge runs. It is much more ingenious than the other, since nearly everyone has a sort of uneasy suspicion of inspired speech, and feels that the eloquent man is dangerously near to the actor. In that suspicion, however, there is more muddled feeling than clear thought. If it were fully accepted it would sweep away a great deal more than those who entertain it realize. It would, indeed, mean that, like Plato, we had got to exclude all artists from the Republic; all those persons, that is to say, who had something to express and sufficient mastery over a medium to express it. They are all in the same boat. For what is implied is that genuine feeling is inarticulate or at best a stutter; to have learned how to express is to have ceased to feel. A great many people do really take this view. That is one reason why they have such a pathetic belief in amateurs: prefer unfinished sketches to achieved paintings, and "fragments" to perfect poems; would rather "overhear" a musician practising than listen to him in a concert hall, and regard incoherent speakers as more genuine than logical ones. Intermittent inspiration may pass the test: disciplined craftsmanship never. Few are

the artists in any branch whose genuineness would be allowed. It is the commonplace of moral criticism that they " feign " or pretend: that they present as living an emotion which they felt long ago, if ever, and now exploit. For that purpose they use their instrument, whatever it is, with professional skill, the skill of long practice.

This argument finds specious support in certain living examples. But in its theoretic form it covers too much. It implies that sincere expression is possible only to the man who has something quite simple—a direct, unreflective feeling—to express. It would exclude the artist's effort to realize his idea in perfect form and so make it accessible to others. It would allow a man to speak in a passion but not as the result of a passion. " Emotion recollected in tranquillity " becomes a sinister and deceptive thing. It would, as applied to the spoken word, rule out the whole method of persuasion and make every propagandist a charlatan. That is to say it rejects democracy, the method of government by persuasion, discussion and consent.

To say that because MacDonald is a speaker, therefore he is not to be trusted, is an excuse for distrust, not an explanation of it. There are speakers who deserve distrust, as there are artists who are frauds, but the explanation is an individual inference, not an example of a general law. Does it apply in his case?

He can and does move thousands by his words. As a speaker he is an artist, not an amateur. He has a baritone voice of rare beauty with notes in it as moving as those of a violoncello and an unusual range of colour in its inflections. He can make it crack like a pistol: he can make it sing. Even when he is doing nothing particular with it, it makes music. The middle register, unforced, carries easily across the largest hall. Yet at times, possibly when tired, he forces it so badly that one is driven to believe that the general appearance of technical mastery is illusory: his voice simply follows his mind, without his thinking about it. So do his gestures. He moves on the platform with complete freedom, an easy expressive grace. There is no gesticulation, but every action suggests harmonious co-operation of brain and body. All this of course gives points to those who want to suggest that the orator is cousin to the actor. But criticism must further take in the fact that except in occasional passages, the substance and structure of MacDonald's speaking are not emotional. He has a wide range of variety: can pass from invective to ridicule, from an apparent cynicism, in exposing the weak points in an opponent's case, turning it inside out, laughing it to scorn, to an idealism that clothes itself in images, lifted out of the commonplace by a life-giving touch of genuine imaginative colour. His method is extremely free. There is always

a strong, connecting, argumentative thread, but very little of the magniloquence of a "set" speech. His vitality and variety make him exceptionally difficult to report, as does the closeness of the logical texture under the apparent spontaneity of form. Speaking, broadly, he addresses himself to the heads of his hearers rather than to their hearts; he wants to make them think rather than to make them shout. They will shout; there are notes in his voice which compel it; but he moves on, over the shouting, with an argument he forces them to follow and to share. There are speakers who hold their audiences in a sort of spellbound trance which only dissolves in thunder at the close. MacDonald's method is not that. He wakes his audience up so that they feel they are doing at least their part in the thinking, are co-operating throughout. Sustained liveliness is the mark of his meetings.

No speaker can stay far above the common measure of his audience. MacDonald at times rises to heights of genuine and moving eloquence, but exaltation is not his characteristic note. He keeps people on a walking, not a flying level: a level at which, with a decent effort, they might stay: a level well above that lowest common measure, to which many successful speakers appeal for their effects. Here our critic comes in. A lowest common measure, he suggests, is rock-bottom: you can hold men at that. Any-

thing above it partakes of illusion. MacDonald gives his people the illusion that they can stay a little above that lowest level. At the moment —so the argument runs—they are there, but they cannot hold there. To suggest to them that they can is to deceive them, and himself. Such "deception," if it be one, is of the essence of democracy, which implies that men can be better than they now are, and that they can help one another to become so. Here again distrust of MacDonald is, to a large extent, distrust of democracy. His critics, whether on the right or on the left, will generally be found united in a rejection, conscious or unconscious, of the democratic ideal.

It has another element more difficult to explore, this distrust. "A great man?" said Nietzsche, who at least knew what he was talking about. "I see merely the play-actor of his own ideal." To this charge anyone animated by a conscious purpose is exposed: none can be completely defended against it. No outsider can know how far a man's conscious purpose is detached from himself. His self must remain his instrument for its achievement, the only one over which he has complete control, and to that extent a confusion between himself and it is inevitable. The degree to which MacDonald in this sense "acts up" to his ideal can only be determined after a more thorough-going examination of his career, and even then the answer will be incomplete and

coloured by the prejudices of the interrogator. After all there are those who hold that sincerity is found only in the highly self-analytical: others who would maintain, with equal warmth, that no self-analyst can be sincere. One might safely paraphrase for modern usage the old Greek saying and "Count no man sincere till he is dead."

An ambiguous genius—perhaps that is all that can be said so far. A man who, whatever he is, has got to be accepted and understood as the chosen representative of democracy.

He is the leader of the official Opposition: within a measurable distance of time he will be called upon to form the first Labour Government. What sort of government will it be? The answer must be that it depends on European events and their reactions on his supporters. A man can only use the instrument to his hand; his actions are conditioned by his circumstances. The circumstances are exceptionally difficult; the instrument—the Labour Party—a tool of many edges, some of them better adapted for cutting the hand that holds it than for anything else. So far, however, as can be judged on a record of under a year, the omens are encouraging. It is not without reason that European labour is now looking to Great Britain for guidance, hope, and saving action. It is the change in the Labour Party rather than the change in the Government that has made Parliament interesting. MacDonald's own part in this change has been important. His election

as leader at once made an end of the competing claims of Liberal factions to be recognized as co-eval with Labour; the Party's right to be the official opposition was established. In his first speech, in reply to the Address, he struck a clear and challenging note. Here was a new voice. His backbenchers sounded it even more loudly. At the same time he re-established the parliamentary ascendancy which good judges had recognized when he led the tiny pre-war Labour Party: even when, during the war itself, he had practically no one behind him. Power and knowledge, mastery of the instrument and a clear apprehension of the purposes for which it is to be used; a very few days made these things plain. A new force had come into effect in British politics, and the man who wielded it could contend, on more than equal terms, with the recognized champions. Lloyd George, so long the centre of press interest, dropped out: MacDonald took his place. The difference in accent is prodigious. It was felt not only at home. The sensitive filaments of the United States' press agencies responded at once. American interviewers buzzed round the House of Commons, tracked the leader of the Opposition down to his modest home in Hampstead. The Continental press followed suit.

This immediate impression has since been continuously driven home. MacDonald himself has moved steadily up in public esteem. Inside the

House few opportunities have been missed that leadership could use. In foreign policy his suggestion of consultation between Parliaments, and arrangement of a meeting in Paris between British, Belgian, French, and German Socialists paved the way for Germany's recent offers and suggested the line on which a Labour Government would deal with the European tangle. If in power MacDonald knows how he would act. The same decisive clarity has been evidenced in home affairs. Thus his line on the Irish deportations was right, while the lawyers both of the Government and of the Liberals were wrong. On Unemployment, Housing, Education, Pensions, the Government has been challenged. Outside the House his intervention, first in the Building and later in the Agricultural dispute averted catastrophe. An invitation to dine at Buckingham Palace has given the highest sanction to his present rank and future claims. At the same time his refusal to take part in merely social, as distinct from official functions, and his firm insistence on remaining a private gentleman without any handle to his name, has quietened the nerves of his own supporters.

It is an astonishing transformation scene. Between 1914 and 1922, and particularly after 1918, the impression was assiduously fostered that MacDonald's career was finished. When before the last General Election the prospects of the Labour Party were scanned and leaders can-

vassed, his name hardly figured in the selections. He had been out of Parliament for four years. The Woolwich failure, though narrow, seemed disastrous—and Woolwich was so late in the series of bye-elections as to suggest that there were people in the Party who had no particular desire to see him back. The public was ignorant of the work he had been doing for the Party in the country and behind the scenes. The constituency he fought was not in the limelight, and many regarded it as a forlorn hope. He was returned by a 3,000 majority and the cloud was rent. Within a week he had been chosen as leader: within a month any other leadership seemed absurd. As the *Times* put it, in reviewing the Session, he has "throughout stood as a tower of strength to his followers."

Yet even now there is no man of anything like his distinction who is so much of a dark horse to the ordinary member of the public. Over a long period of years, it has been the business of the organs on which people generally rely for information about a public character to hide or distort his activities. There is Hansard from 1906 to 1918; his own writings, his books and the articles he has contributed to the press of his own party. They are fairly voluminous: his powers of work are great. The general press, however, helps one little. He is a speaker first, a writer second. From 1914 to 1922 his speeches have never been adequately reported, often not

reported at all. The newspaper files, so useful in the case of his political opponents, are singularly bare for him. Over months, even years, in which he was incessantly active, constantly addressing big meetings in the country, there is no reflected sign in the press. He was moulding the opinion of Labour: but the process was hidden away in a ridiculous effort to thwart it. Had he been as silent as John Burns he could not have been more of a mystery to the average newspaper reader than he was in 1922. Even the *Daily Herald* up to then is of surprisingly little assistance. Its columns suggest that half a dozen men were more important in the movement than the one who now visibly overtops them. True, this attitude might have been corrected by a talk with Socialists from abroad. In the International his rank was never in doubt. Since Keir Hardie's death, he has been the only British Socialist classed with Jaurès, Bebel, Liebknecht, Victor Adler, and the giants of the Second International. But the opinions of Socialists abroad are wholly hidden from most Britons and count only for the future.

To the average citizen, therefore, MacDonald is as mysterious as he is interesting. Before trying to penetrate the mystery it may be well to attempt to describe it. For that purpose I do not think I can do better than record a conversation which gave me the initial impulse to attempt the present study.

SOME QUESTIONS

"Look on his face, to see thy neighbour's soul,
Not on his garments, to detect a hole."

IT was a Sunday afternoon; we were sitting in the garden in that richest of uncounted hours when, tea left behind, dinner is still a distant prospect. The sun shone through the trees and made fascinating shadow-lines across the lawn. The midges had begun to come out, but smoke could keep them at bay. There was the scent of distant hay, and somewhere the whirr of a machine—though Sunday the rare fine spell had to be used. It was the ideal hour for talk. Yet for some reason talk languished. We had already talked excessively during the week-end. Some of us had played golf and were agreeably somnolent. When I rose and went into the house to fetch my book the occupants of the deck-chairs seemed to be dozing; the cloud of smoke that overhung them in the still air might have been the fumes of gradually settling opium.

When I returned something had happened. They were sitting up, buzzing like bees. In a minute or two I caught on. Someone had; in my brief absence, mentioned a name that broke up the dozing silence. It seemed a sort of spell.

Everyone had something to say. For a minute or two no one listened to the others. Gradually, however, the thing cleared. I was able to disentangle.

The first voice to detach itself was that of the stockbroker—a decent sort, this, though not overweighted with imagination, and more sentimental than he realizes. He has a loud voice and evidently spoke with considerable feeling.

"I grant you that in the last few months he's done his best to look like any other 'statesman.' But you can't judge him on the last few months. After all, facts are facts." (This is a form of expression he is fond of.) "I'm not going to forget that he played the part of a traitor during the war. He was alone, so nothing much came of it; but how do you know he wouldn't do the same again? We may be in another war any day, and where will he be? You don't really know anything about him, any of you. I don't pretend to—but my memory's not so short as yours."

"We do know one thing," said our host, a banker with the face of a visionary. "He's got brains. Men with brains are never so dangerous as men without. Brains and . . ."

The stockbroker interrupted.

"Brains?" he said, bitterly. "Yes. Lloyd George has brains."

The banker smiled.

"You interrupted me," he said. "I was

going to say he's also got honesty—which makes a good deal of difference. . . . After all, the war showed that. You'd agree he's honest, wouldn't you?" He turned to the major. "You know him?"

The major stroked his moustache. "I would," he said. "He gives me that impression."

"That's interesting." The journalist sat up. "For that's not the general impression. Do you mean that you believe what he says, or that he's not out for his own hand?"

The soldier looked at him thoughtfully. "I'm afraid of talking to you," he said. "You're so damned clever. You build theories about everything, don't you? . . . What I feel is that he's ready to look at the other side as well as his own."

"A jolly sight too ready, most people would say. But go on."

"And that there's something he's keen about apart from himself. I mean, he's keen about it, not about his part in it. D'you know what I mean?"

"Oh, yes. I know what you mean. I'm not sure that I agree with you. You couldn't tell me what that thing is he's keen about, apart from himself? No. Of course not. What's he working for now? I get the feeling that he's playing his own hand."

"What indeed?" cried the stockbroker.

"But where is he now? Is he out to—what do they call it?—expropriate us all? Is he a Bolshevik? I'm blest if I can make out. I read a report of a speech one day in which he's against it, and the next his charges in the House are shouting and yelling, getting suspended and singing the Red Flag: and nobody knows whether he can hold them. And that's not all. The whole Party's gone Socialist—so what's the sense of his telling us they're gentlemen? A Socialist is a Bolshie, and the Bolshies are murderers. . . . It suits his book to seem respectable and dine with bishops and so on—I wonder his own crowd aren't fed up with his snobbery, if with nothing else, except that they're all the same—but who knows what he's got up his sleeve? They say he refused the P.C.—and I believe behind that soft manner he's got a plan to blow us up."

The major shook his head. "He's not that sort. He's got some sort of plan—I don't know what it is, I'm not interested in theories—but I'd bet it's got nothing to do with gunpowder. . . . Not that I know. . . . It'd surprise you, but we generally talk my shop, not his, when we meet: and he's interesting about it, I can tell you. He was the only man I knew before the war who'd read Clausewitz and knew what it was about. . . . He'd have made a fine soldier."

There was something regretful in his tone. It

roused the youngest member of the group, our host's son, an Oxford undergraduate of vast and weary wisdom.

"That's what's wrong with him, to my mind. What did he want to be reading Clausewitz for? He was far too much interested in tactics then—understanding war instead of condemning it; he's far too much interested in the Constitution now. Things have got to be smashed." His eyes flashed behind their spectacles. "Make no mistake about it. MacDonald's a compromiser. He goes about settling strikes and soothing the middle classes. He's always been against the class war. Lenin was right when he said he'd stop a revolution if it ever got near it in England."

"I admit," said the journalist, "that he did more than any man to smash the British Communist movement. . . . How many are there of you now? Strength mostly in Oxford, I gather, and not much at that. . . . As for the strikes, I suppose you'd have liked a few more Black Fridays, just to hearten the proletariate?"

"You don't understand the English, my son," the banker interposed. "MacDonald does, I fancy. He never has believed in your sort of revolution, which makes a horrid mess-up and then sends you back to where you were before. He's out for quite a different sort. I'm against it, but his way is much more seriously dangerous

than yours. You see he knows that the only revolution that's going to last will happen so quietly that ninety-nine people out of a hundred won't know it's going on till it's done."

"And all the time you'll be busy denouncing him as a reactionary," cried the journalist. "You have your uses."

"And you call that democracy?" cried young Oxford. "Well, I wish you joy of it. But don't ask *me* to call MacDonald an honest man."

"I don't," said the journalist. "I am taking no sides on that. I'm not so sure that he is. . . . It's the major who answers for that, not me. And I'm not so sure about democracy, either. Democracy seems to mean all power to the shouters and death to brains. That's Mac's danger—the shouters may boot him out, one day, and run amuck. Where will you be then? Safe here, I suppose. . . . Honesty is a puzzle. I've been in doubt for a long while whether honesty can be combined with brains. It seems to me a form of stupidity. . . . If not, you need more brains to manage it than anyone I've met has got. You have to take in simply everything. Mac, I dare say, takes in a lot. . . . For instance, he's a Scottish nationalist, I gather."

"Rather!" sniffed Oxford. "Thinks Knox a great man; lectures about him in South Wales and captures the Nonconformist vote. . . .

"And one of those fool internationalists who

call the Indians brothers," chipped in the stockbroker. "Besides poking his nose into every powder magazine in Europe."

There was a brief pause.

"You've heard him speak?" said the journalist.

It was to the major the remark was addressed. He shook his head. The stockbroker made an indignant gesture of repudiation.

"Nothing would induce me. I don't want to hear him praising his German friends. . . ."

"Well, you ought to. He's not a bit what you expect. You'd like him. He's got something for everyone, Mac has. His Indian friends think he's a re-incarnated Brahmin. A Pole I met in Vienna said he was Kosciusko or some blighter like that come to life again. . . . He certainly would have made a fine actor—Knox or no Knox: and Knox is there all right. He knows how to use him. He knows how to use everything."

"I know he's got the gift of the gab," said the stockbroker, unappeased. "That cuts no ice with me. In spite of what the major says I can see you don't trust him?"

The journalist acknowledged the hit. "That's professional," he said. "Trick of the trade. Besides, in my private capacity, I'm a Free Liberal. We can't. . . . All the same, you know, you ought to hear him. So ought you." He glanced at the soldier. "It's a great

performance. Whether he's doing plain songs or hymns he can deliver the goods. My trouble is I get so interested in the man I don't listen to what he's saying. The way he does it fascinates me. He can play every stop in the organ. The people gape up at him as if he were an inspired prophet when he pulls out the vox humana at the end. That puts me off, I admit—but I always go. . . . Take it all over, he knocks any other speaker in Britain right off. He's got real eloquence—that sort of moral passion I'd like to laugh at, but, seriously, I can't. . . . I pick every hole in it I can, but in the end I have to take off my hat. Of course there are streaks of commonplace, even in his purple passages. And yet, just when you're saying to yourself he's not an intellectual, he suddenly drops something that seems to go much deeper than cleverness, to get right behind it; makes you feel that intellectuals are cold fishes in tanks and he's a bird in the air. Then, down you go again on some piece of claptrap: something so sentimental that it makes you ill and so old-fashioned that you don't know where you are."

"I've only heard him in the House," said the banker. "He was very good, but not at all oratorical. I did listen to what he was saying, and it was worth it. And he seemed to me quite straightforward: not provocative"—he smiled at his son, who hunched his shoulders angrily—"but quite straightforward."

"Yes, yes . . . I think he's honest enough about his opinions: and I don't agree with some of our people who say he's a Liberal. He isn't. He's a Socialist right enough, and if they all knew a quarter as much economics and worked half as hard as he does, we'd be in a pretty pickle. But what puzzles me and interests me is some stoppage I can feel in the man himself. There's a streak of the artist—but not quite enough. I feel it even in his speaking; he just stops short of the biggest effects. And it goes deeper than speaking. Do you know what I mean? He's never quite carried away. There's something —I can't imagine what—that prevents his letting himself go. I suppose he'd call it his reason."

"The heart has its reasons," murmured the banker's wife, seated on my right. "Does he understand them? His face suggests that he understands everything. But faces are so misleading."

"I wonder," said the girl beyond her, "if he's ever been in love? Oh, you know what I mean—not the ordinary thing."

The company laughed, but the journalist looked at her gravely.

"I wonder if you're right. Perhaps that's it. Perhaps he can't. . . ." He lost himself in thought.

"The thing that puzzles me," said the major, "is how a man with his brains can believe in

equality, or even in democracy. An army can't lead itself."

"He doesn't," cried young Oxford. "He's a dictator. That's why he's against dictatorship."

His father smiled. "I expect he thinks all that's a long way off," he murmured.

"Yes. He wants it to be a long way off. He's not going to hurry it on."

"It's odd," said the major, pursuing his own train of thought. "I've known him a good while and we've hardly ever talked politics. Of course he knows I'm an old Tory, so it's no good. But if you leave out all that, there's no end to the things he's interested in. He'd have been a big man in any other profession."

The banker nodded. "Yes. Do you know I think that's one of the most significant things about him? I mean that you can, as you say, like him and leave his politics out. It doesn't mean that they're not real to him: I'm sure they are. He's got an active conscience: he'll go on till he drops, success or no. He doesn't deceive himself. Where I disagree with you"—he looked at the journalist—"is about his ambition. I'm not so sure that he's very ambitious—no, really I'm not. Not as ambitious perhaps as he ought to be. Not enough concentrated on one thing. A really ambitious man wants one thing and lets all the rest go. I can't see MacDonald letting all the rest go. Some things, yes: the war

showed that; but not all. I can't believe he'd do what he thought wrong to obtain any end whatever. . . . That's to say he's not a fanatic. I have a sort of feeling that fanatics get things done, and they're not pleasant. Now MacDonald is pleasant. Everybody—well nearly everybody"—he smiled at the stockbroker—"likes him. He wants everyone to like him. You'd like him if you met him—oh, yes, you would. That's really why you don't want to. . . . Now, I don't suppose we'd find Lenin agreeable. Ought we to find MacDonald so?"

"You seem so sure we would," said the stockbroker. "I doubt it."

"Oh, yes, you would," said the major. "He's a delightful companion. Plays a jolly good game of golf, too—that ought to melt your heart. He's too good for me, of course: he's the sort of man who is good at anything he takes up—but that's just as well. I don't fancy he'd like to be beaten. . . . What are you smiling at?"

The banker's wife had looked up again from her sewing. "I don't know, quite," she said. "I was only wondering whether all big people aren't rather trying. It is not that I mind their playing first fiddle: it's when they sigh about it that I'm put off. That's having it both ways. Even what you say about success"—she glanced at her husband—"really means that. I agree with what you said, but doesn't it mean he wants the

results of ambition without being ambitious, without paying for it? He can't help being ambitious, he's too much of an egotist. I noticed in our talk (I sat next him at dinner) we never got off his doings. Yet he wants to be modest and simple and all the rest as well. And you can't. You can't have it both ways. He wants to."

The banker smiled tolerantly.

"Egotism? Yes. That's there, of course. I don't think you can get leadership without that. Think what it means, the perpetual struggle with men. You must be pretty sure of yourself and have endless power of sticking to it. . . . And Labour Parties have never been specially distinguished for loyalty. I accept his egotism. I'm still a bit dubious about his ambition."

This was more than Oxford could bear.

"And I'm sure he's the most personally ambitious man in politics. Only his ambition is to be Premier, not to produce Socialism. Where you make a mistake is in thinking he's on the left. He's not. He's a traditionalist: a ritualist. If he'd been born south of the Tweed he'd have been a bishop."

"On the left?" The journalist woke up. "Oh, yes, he's on the left all right, if there is such a place. As for ritual, he cares less for it than you do. You're all ritualists—not to say revelationists—you Socialists. Being on the left isn't a matter of mouth-organs, you know, really.

That's where *you* make a mistake. . . . Of course, frankly, as a Liberal, I'm afraid of him. He's going to do us in. He's got that magnetism that Lloyd George has and Simon and our crowd haven't a glint of, plus something Lloyd George never had—continuity of purpose. What his purpose is I'm not so sure : but he can stick to it—and if only he doesn't hide it too carefully I believe he'll reach it. But he is apt to hide. That's our chance. . . . Being agreeable "—he turned to the banker—" is, as I see it, partly tactic. We are to think he's to do us no harm. Only partly, I admit. Partly it's nature, which gave him his face and his voice and so makes the stupid things he sometimes says sound interesting. There's no charm in his writing; his books—oh, yes, I'm conscientious, I've read them all—are dry stuff, full of out-of-date biology : but there is about the man himself. And he's a personality on the platform or off it."

"Do you know him personally?" asked the major.

"Oh, a little. Not well. I doubt if anyone knows him well. You don't, do you?"

"No, not really well: certainly not intimately."

"I always go and report him and sometimes I talk to him, or rather he talks to me."

"And you're not convinced he's sincere? I would answer for that, you know."

The journalist hesitated for a moment. "I think he has a sincere belief in himself. A much simpler sort of one than Simon, who is always self-questioning before a moral looking-glass. Simon wishes always to do right: Mac believes what he does is right. You see the difference, don't you? If Mac did a cruel thing —and I fancy he's quite capable of it: I'd 'allow' that he's got that sort of rather awful bigness— he'd look at it, once, and never again: know it for what it was and put it away. Simon would persuade himself that he was only cruel to be kind, and so not cruel at all: he'd play with it till he was convinced he suffered more than the other person."

"H'm." The soldier pondered. "You think he's good?"

The journalist looked at him seriously.

"Oh, yes. I'm pretty sure of that. In the sense I suppose you mean, quite sure. . . . There are well-defined limits to the goodness of any egotist, as I'm sure our hostess would admit. . . . But broadly, yes. I think one must start from that."

"You're very clever all of you," the soldier sighed, wistfully. "But, do you know, I feel you're too clever to be quite convincing. I admit that there is a sort of mystery somewhere: I'm pretty sure it's not insincerity. But there is something that stops me from feeling quite at home with him . . . I feel there are barriers.

. . . I don't know what they are. I'm no good at explaining. . . . But they're there."

The journalist nodded. "I'm bound to admit that Gladstone gave people the same sort of feeling, though it rather upsets my theories. The Tories called him a hypocrite, quite frankly. Of course they were wrong. He was too sincere for them to understand and not interested in explaining. He communed with his own soul, and kept the process dark. That worried Liberals too. I dare say Mac does the same. Not that I think he's as big as the G.O.M. But there is an odd resemblance. It's partly why we have to hate him so." He laughed.

The stockbroker had been silent for a long time. Now he burst out, as if uncontrollably moved.

"Well, you people amaze me," he cried. "I don't understand you. Here's a Socialist, pledged to a programme that'd turn all this"—he swept the garden and the park beyond with his arm—"into beastly allotments: that'd ruin the credit of the country and make us pariahs in Europe like the Bolshies; a man who would have made peace with the Hun in 1917, and in 1914 . . ." Words temporarily failed him. "You seem to have forgotten everything between 1914 and now. . . . I simply cannot comprehend it. He's not changed. Four years ago you'd have agreed with me, now wouldn't you?"

"Four years ago we thought Germany was going to pay for the war," said the banker dryly.

"Well, so it should."

"Yes. But it hasn't, has it? . . . Four years hence MacDonald may be Prime Minister."

"And thank heaven," cried the journalist, "he's an interesting man, whether or no—which is more than can be said of most of our Prime Ministers! Although I'd never claim to be impartial—as you doubtless have seen I'm rabid against him politically, and want to think as ill of him as I can—I do admit that. I wish we had anyone half as interesting! . . . I believe that's the gong."

It was: and there for the time being the conversation ended. It has remained in my mind, as I said, and I believe that it represents a pretty general baffled curiosity about its subject. The views may not be typical, except of the fact that people who don't know must invent, but the interest behind them is.

It dates back beyond the period when he was discussable as a possible Prime Minister, has little to do with that; that is, as it were, after the fact, an effect not a cause. Plenty of people would hold, if they reflected about the matter, that he is too interesting to be a Prime Minister. He suggests the sort of person who might write

a novel, and since Disraeli no British Prime Minister has had the most distant connection with novels. He has the external marks—a name that takes a good deal of living up to: a face that takes even more: a record that, superficially apprehended, asks more questions than it answers: the suggestion of an atmosphere of mystery, at once attractive to some and repellent to others. Take these things together and you have what the journalist calls "news value." The plain man may have no name for it, but he feels it and it puzzles him. It is a quality distinct from, additional to, achievement, which lends it a sort of colour. There are people who have done a great deal who never acquire it; others who do little have it, by right divine. It is a sort of megaphoned charm, carried right across to the million. While it attracts interest and builds headlines, it also, like the simpler private forms of charm, annoys as well as appeals. Always there is an element in it that provokes or even puts off the fastidious. Whether or no they admit his charm, few have nothing to say about Ramsay MacDonald, however exiguous their knowledge or intense their irritation. At the present moment a certain degree of curiosity as to what manner of man he is is almost a duty.

But a talk with any of the people, in whatever party, who enjoy some measure of personal acquaintance with him indicates, as does the

conversation recorded at the opening of this chapter, that the difficulty in understanding him is not only external. There has been a conspiracy of silence, which has erected a wall of mystery—mystery intended to be sinister and repellent. Mystery of another sort remains in the report of those who have got nearer and who are definitely and frankly attracted. There is a sort of dark glow about the man. The more romantic of his friends love to theorize about it, but their theories are not explanatory. That impression, and not very much more, is faithfully rendered in an article which Mr. C. F. G. Masterman contributed to the June issue of the American *Century Magazine*.

Mr. Masterman was in the House with him from 1906 to 1910, and his impression is coloured mainly by his knowledge of MacDonald during that time. It is a sympathetic study of a man of high purpose, singular determination and unusual courage; above all of a man of sorrows. In the effort to humanize his subject Mr. Masterman makes the death of his wife the central revealing fact in his experience. He may be right, but in doing so he tends, in stressing the personal, to under-estimate the intellectual side. Because his mind rather than his character is revealed in his work it is perhaps natural that the friend should under-state that aspect. Yet there the friend commits an error in proportion. It is an error almost universal in the attempt to

understand big men—the error of leaving out their bigness. The public life of a public character, the intellectual expression of a thinker, is really more important than his "private" life. The known is more important than the unknown. To attempt to portray MacDonald without full recognition of his ideas is to give a false impression. At the same time Mr. Masterman's article should serve in the United States as a useful corrective to the ill-natured inaccuracies of P.W.W. and the New York *World*, or the amiable imbecilities of Mr. Frank Dilnot, in the American *Review of Reviews* two years ago, where the fact that he plays a good game of golf and smokes a big cigar was adduced as a reason for placing him low on the list of possible Labour leaders. He realizes that his subject is a big man and that he does not know everything about him. What he does know, or guess, he presents with an appreciative skill well calculated to increase interest and whet further curiosities.

Guess work—there must always be a large element of that. Admitting it, one at least avoids the error of those friends and biographers who claim to know more of a character than its possessor, and to lay down a clear and comprehensive map of the dark world, crossed and transformed by light and shadow, which is the human soul. Can one at best hope to do more than attempt, with a candid recognition of the vast

possibilities of error, the method applied by Conrad's wonderful Jim Marlow? For that effort a position outside the circle of intimacy has its advantages. Direct contact hampers as well as helps. It implies some knowledge of that baffling element introduced when you have to know how a man sees himself. This is indeed the interposition of a second screen which hinders at least as much as it helps, except in the case of persons of unself-conscious naïveté—and of unself-conscious naïveté I have never heard anyone accuse MacDonald, who is accused of so many things.

What one can do is to utilize whatever may be given by the direct contact of others, while discounting as far as may be the personal peculiarity (of which they are unaware) in their interpretation, and build on that. The unprejudiced observer of course is a myth; certain prejudices admitted at the outset can be allowed for. A Socialist will be struck by points different from those which appeal to a Conservative; an artist by others uninteresting to a journalist; a soldier by others again irrelevant to a romantic woman; a banker by those that leave a naturalist cold. Thus each of the parties to the conversation I have recorded communicated something then, and subsequently: each helped to resist the fatal tendency to allow too little for the element of inconsistency there is in every living creature. A real man is neither a smooth round nor a

perfect square. If describable by any geometrical figure, he is an irregular rhomboid. So soon as the drawing becomes symmetrical it is certain to be wrong.

A good deal can be learned from a candid inspection of the facts of MacDonald's career, more from the indications afforded of his writings and speeches. Begin, however, by a simpler and directer impression: that given by his face.

Occasionally it happens that as the eye surveys the blurred faces that make up a great audience, undifferentiated, featureless, one suddenly detaches itself and stands out with a distinctness that has an odd, an almost frightening authority. The separation seems to be accidental. More often it is the expression of some quality not noticed before: something intrinsic in the face or the person behind the face that makes it significant. One gets the illusion, if it be an illusion, of seeing a man as he is. However that may be, I remember how one evening at Queen's Hall, looking up from the Grand Circle at the massed balcony, tier upon tier, each crowded to its utmost capacity and reaching it seemed, in the mist cast by the headlights, up to the ceiling and possibly beyond it, I was suddenly aware of a single head. Against the others it stood out clear and sharp as a cameo, or a profile from some fine coin. The darkness of eyes, brows, and moustache seemed to give added value to the sculptured quality of features

and steely curling hair. The whole seemed to me, as I looked up, as if wrought in metal.

It grew clearer as I gazed, though the other faces in the row remained vague and indeterminate, except one, a sort of reflection of itself, beside it. A young man this, with the same features; the same in general line, in the fine carving of brow, nose, and strong chin; but not the same in moulding. Here was the clay which under the stress of things, external and internal, had been burned to the finer substance of the older head. Time for once was justified of his handiwork. The face had a finished, highly wrought quality, rare in the North and above all in England; something classical in the definition and beauty of its form. How I should have wondered, had I not known who they were, this father and son. Since I did know my mind moved away to other questions, superficial and yet suggestive.

The great people, in so far as any of them were present at a concert wonderful in quality but not in the "social events" list, were below in the stalls. Even the most minor member of the Government would have felt that his place: ordinary M.P.'s were at worst in the Grand Circle. But the Leader of the Opposition was up among the gods—the first time surely that the governors have really sat among the governed. It might make a big difference if that became common. It suggested, as such trifling things

sometimes do more forcibly than spectacular demonstrations, some of the changes Labour Government might mean. He could not help it if he stood out among them: he would have looked even more different among the people on the floor.

From these reflections I came back to the face again and tried to make out what it said. Appearances are said to be deceptive: but one can carry that notion too far. They do not tell one everything: beautiful faces cover ugly characters, sometimes: a man may look noble and have some secret meanness in his soul. But it is more usual to find in a face some reflection of the spirit behind it. Eyes and mouths are not good keepers of secrets. MacDonald's eyes—brown, like water, not like beads, with a great deal of light in them—look straight at you. That wide setting seldom goes with meanness of nature, any more than does an open gaze with a furtive habit. His mouth is hidden by his moustache—except in speaking one can hardly see it. Its compression suggests patience, the jaw and chin determination and will power. It is a powerful head. Power rather than sympathy or insight, is what the face suggests if, for the moment, the æsthetic appeal is left out. But it is absurd to leave it out. It is there, and important. To look like no one else is an advantage, anyhow, for a public character: to look more pleasing than most people, better still.

Mere unsupported good looks may be a hindrance; but if a man can "deliver the goods," an aspect resembling Mercury or Apollo rather than Vulcan, enhances their value. That value is not only in its effect on others. It has its effect on its possessor. To a man, as to a woman, beauty gives both power and freedom, releases from self-consciousness and the minor forms of "nerves." He can be heard without raising his voice, count upon making his presence felt without effort, rise superior to minor social awkwardnesses. The Olympian is not afflicted by a sense that he has a hole in his stocking or a frayed collar.

Of no man or woman over forty is the face an accident. By then, if the forces within count for anything, if they direct and govern, character will have set its stamp on the raw material of inheritance, have selected this, neglected that, made what the individual has done for his countenance at least as noticeable as what it has done for him. MacDonald started life with good looks. He was, says Mr. Masterman, the handsomest man in the 1906 Parliament. But compare a photograph of the nineties or even of the first decade of 1900 with a recent one. What is most striking is the increasing dominance of the mind over its physical envelope. Even the sculptural quality, striking now, is more marked than it was. And this certainly is no accident. Men of his age tend to get flabby in the face.

There is a coarsening, thickening, over-laying of the structural lines, above all of the lines of jaw and chin. Briand, Lloyd George, Asquith, Wilson, Harding, Poincaré, all show this. In MacDonald's case the lines are clearer, stronger, more definite at fifty-six than they were at thirty-six. His jaw is athletic in its cleanness. The whole face indeed is athletic, not ascetic. The athlete is bent on something positive and, for that, has left temptation behind. The ascetic is exhausted in resisting temptation, so busy fighting devils that he can enjoy nothing. He tends to look either frigid or pathetic. There is no hint of either in MacDonald's sparkling eyes. Frigidity and pathos are equally remote. Training is not a hardship: the athlete's mind is set not on the puddings he may not eat but on the race he means to win.

Suffering is another matter. If Nietzsche was right when he said that "profound suffering makes noble, it separates" and that "it almost determines the order of rank how deeply men can suffer," MacDonald is marked by this separation. His face shows that he has suffered, but not that suffering has broken or arrested his will. His "I" has conquered and come out on top.

This is the first thing the face gives one—the impression of a powerful personality disciplined and controlled. The control is at least as obvious as the power. Magnanimity, generosity—the

wide spacing of the eyes, the broad and lofty brow, the open nostrils, imply these things: there is none of the suggestion of cruelty frequent enough in dominant types, and little of any crossing or perplexity of impulse. It is a face that has weathered storms and has kept straight on. Nor is the impression of classical regularity given by the main structure gainsaid by the fact that the two sides of the face are not identical. They seldom are, and here the general sculptural form is more significant than the droop of the left eye and slight difference in the two sides of the nose which gives two markedly different profiles. Such an outline should correspond to a rigorous sense of form. Across minor contradictions cut authoritative guiding lines: the simple and direct compulsions that carry through to action. The combination of brow and jaw indicates that in him the intellectual dominates the instinctive, purpose dominates impulse. Does not his face reveal a man of "musts" not a man of "mays"? a man who acts, not a man who ponders why he acts? Ours is an increasingly self-conscious age: an age of mays. We are concerned with criticism, interpretation, psychology. Analysis has undermined for most people, for more than realize it, the old commands and prohibitions: they wander vaguely about an uncharted void. MacDonald, unless his face belies him, is not one of them. There are commands and prohibitions written there—no doubt

his own—which he obeys, has obeyed, will obey, whatever the cost.

This face belongs to the constructive, not the critical type. Clear from your mind the notion that a " man of action " is a man who acts without thinking, a thinker a man who thinks without acting, and admit that the true distinction is concerned not with the preliminary brain work, which must be there, but with its issue. Do you think in order to understand or to do? If men of action are those for whom to think is to act, MacDonald is a man of action; a man who wants to make people act, and to act rightly, but is more interested in their acting than in understanding why they act. This may apply to himself as well as to them. The face is that of an egotist, but not of a self-conscious egotist. It is the face of one who gives, rather than of one who takes: of one, too, whose giving and whose taking are determined from within. He gives, one might guess, because he is generous, not because he has divined the need of the recipient. His mind may be subtle, but there is little reflection of that subtlety in his face; if there, it is intellectual, not moral. The individuality is pronounced and dominant, but probably is taken entirely for granted.

For instance, I find it difficult to imagine his reading this book. Certainly if he were given to understand that it was an effort to comprehend his character rather than to describe his action

he would shrug his shoulders and let it lie. But though he might prefer to stand on his achievement, that very achievement compels the observer to curiosity about the man : a curiosity his face stimulates but does not solve.

THE WAY UP

"Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt."
Goethe.

"EVENTS mark your road: they do not indicate the purpose of your journey." The words are MacDonald's own and contain a timely reminder to anyone who hopes to find in the facts of a career the answer to the riddle of personality. The answer is not there, certainly, but some of its conditions are.

For instance, although MacDonald strikes anyone who meets him as being, in an unusual degree, self-determined, and though that is an impression which his face confirms, self-determination operates within limits. In every human being there are deep ancestral and local strains, forces that derive from his race and his place. In his make up Scotland is vitally significant. Its superficial signs remain in the definition of his consonants, so valuable to a public speaker, and the breadth of his vowels, which sometimes puzzle an English audience. "Wurrld" is a better carrying sound, with a richer meaning, than the queer mouthful of soft-

ness to which the southron reduces the word, and Labour has an added dignity when its final " r " is sounded. On the other hand, when he told a London crowd that the unemployed problem was to be solved by " thote " there was a perceptible catch of breath before the quicker minds realized he was referring to the use of their intelligence. He no longer speaks, as does the full-blooded northerner, of a committee as if it were a comité with a sharp accentuation of the final " e " : but he does still refer to his cōlleagues, and declare that " there's no the least doubt " about this or that, although by comparison with some of his followers from the west of Scotland his general speech may sound that of a pure Sassenach.

He is a Scot. But there are Scots and Scots. Between Highland and Lowland, between Fife and the Border, between Edinburgh and Glasgow, there are distinctions the Englishman hardly grasps. His homeland is Morayshire, and Morayshire, north and east of the Grampians, breeds a race in which mingle the blood of the Highlanders and that of the Norse rovers from across the sea. No county in Scotland has a prouder heritage of historic association, of legend and heroic story.

Lossiemouth, where he was born in October, 1866, was then half country, half fishing village. To-day, so far as the visitor sees it, it is a holiday resort, one of the Scottish golf paradises : more

beautiful, however, than most, and more romantic. Its aspect he has himself described :

"Away to the north, across the Firth, rose the pale blue hills of Sutherland and Ross; to the south lay the fertile farms of Morayshire sloping up through green wood and purple moorland into the blue tops of the Grampians, with the ruined Palace of Spynie in the mid-distance; to the east swept the sea, bordered by a wide stretch of yellow sand bending away into the horizon, with hills in the background, the whole stretching out in peaceful beauty which has won for it the name of the 'Bay of Naples'; westward were woods and farms up to the encompassing hills. In the autumn . . . the beauty of the place was enhanced by the richest of sunsets in purple and red and gold."[1]

Part of the village perches on a high jut of land that runs out into the Firth and overhangs a rich plain, the historic "Laich of Moray," famous for its fertility and high cultivation. It looks to the sea and to the mountains, their more distant tops snow-capped throughout a large part of the year. To-day there are the usual hotels and houses to be let for summer, and the visitor sees little or nothing of the real life of the place, of the simple fisherfolk and labourers on the land among whom MacDonald grew up; is unaware even of such revealing incidents as the great revival which swept the Firth two years ago, and suddenly called out the strangeness, poetry and passion that lie hidden underneath their proud reticence and that rough humour that can strike the sentimentalist from the south as cruel. Nor does he know anything, for the most part, of the rich history of the region, left enshrined in the

[1] "Margaret Ethel MacDonald," p. 220.

ruined castle of Spynie, the Palace of the ancient Bishops of Moray, and, beyond it, in the superb remains of Elgin Cathedral, built in 1200, and one of the most beautiful ruins in all Scotland; or of the men of its past, heroes in fight and song and story.

These things, however, were as much a part of the inheritance of young James Ramsay MacDonald as the air he breathed : that magical tonic air of sea and mountains which built his uncommon powers of physical endurance. They were pretty nearly all the inheritance he had, indeed, although Spynie churchyard has two gravestones, one of the table kind, recording his forebears for a hundred and fifty years back. He was born into dire poverty. None of our conquerors ever started with the material odds heavier against him. The old folk of Lossiemouth point out with pride the humble houses in which he has lived there, from the tiny two-roomed " but and ben " backing right on to the railway dyke in which, when it wore a low roof of thatch (now altered), he was brought up by his grandmother, to the modest house on the edge of the moor and the sand hillocks and the dunes he now occupies when in Lossiemouth during the summer recess. This house he built for his mother, and there, very soon after it was ready for her, she died (in 1911).

His grandmother's cottage was poor in the extreme, but she herself was a remarkable woman

much respected by all her neighbours and still remembered for her mind and one time beauty. She had seen better days, and, even in the poorest circumstances, retained the demeanour of a gentlewoman, a natural grace and dignity of manner. Her memory was a rich storehouse of ancient lore, of witches and fairies, of tales of second sight and high adventure. She knew all the old folk songs. Spirit and imagination salted the poor fare of the boy's earliest home and made up for short commons in bread and meat. The talk of his grandmother was as good as a library; she brought him in contact with the inspiring men and deeds of the past: but so soon as the little lad could read he searched out all the books the place afforded. There was a watchmaker, home from the south, dying of consumption, who had a small collection: there he made the acquaintance of some of the remarkable men of the country through Samuel Smiles' "Life of a Scottish Naturalist," Thomas Edwards of Banff, "Thomas Dick, the Thurso Baker"—geologist. Above all, Hugh Miller influenced him then. Hugh Miller's "Schools and Schoolmasters" was among the first books he bought. The watchmaker also lent him Scott and Dickens.

But books are only part of life for the most intelligent of growing boys. Natural gifts, energy, and spirit made him, in spite of everything, leader by right divine of the Lossiemouth youngsters: champion in their fights with the

proud folk of the hill and later of Elgin : inventor and chieftain in games and raids, as later in local politics. In school he was easily first, and school gave him more, in the way of real education, than anyone whose ideas are derived from the English village school might imagine. Many years after, when the Dominie died, his most distinguished pupil—who never lost touch with him, and, to this day, wears the gold watch which this first true friend left to him—wrote an appreciation of his teacher in which there are passages that give vivid though reticent glimpses of his own boyhood :

" We had a long way to go to him at school, and the road was bleak. In the summertime, we lengthened it, for there were nests in the gorse and in the trees, and the sea was enticing. Sometimes, alas! we never got there at all, and our ears were deaf to his whistle. Hidden behind trees or among the whins, we saw him come to the door, survey the empty playground, put to his lips the key upon which he summoned us to lessons, presently come again when there was no response to his call, and blow a short, angry blast—all to no purpose. The call of the wild was upon us. The woods, the bushes, the caves, the seashore had us in thrall for the day. We then thought him very angry, but, later on, when we came to talk over those mishaps, we knew that it was the heart of a boy that admonished us next morning, and controlled the strokes that made our fingers tingle, and that whilst he stood with the instrument of torture in his hand—the school giggling behind us the while—instead of the lecture he gave us he would have liked to say : ' I wish I had been with you, but you know that that would not have done.' We always felt, however, that the penalty was just, and that the whole transaction had been good. He never punished without making us feel that.

" The rain poured upon us at other times, and we were soaked through on the road; then the Dominie stirred the fire for us while we steamed in front of it. The snow also came and we had to walk on the tops of dykes when it blew; then he let us out early, to get home by nightfall.

Passing in review those days now that they are far past, the Dominie is never out of the picture. The friend with the ruddy face that never looked old up to the very last, clothed almost always in light grey clothes, of leisurely mien, with the soft voice and the wagging finger, always comes in. No memory of the school is possible without him.

"What was his genius? Nothing recondite; nothing requiring unravelment by analytical minds. The simple kindness of the teacher is perhaps the most precious gift he can give his scholars. By that, he gathers them to his knee, as it were, and puts his arm round about them, and they never forget."

The following suggests how a poor school may be worth more than a rich one—sometimes, and for some scholars :

"The work done in the school was of an old order now. It was a steady hard grind to get at the heart of things. We turned everything outside in, pulled everything to pieces in order to put it together again, analysed, parsed, got firm hold of the roots, shivered English into fragments and fitted them together again like a Chinese puzzle, all by the help of Bain's Sixteenpenny Grammar (which the Dominie's pupils must remember in the same way as they do the Shorter Catechism) and wrestled with 'deductions.' Then every bolt in our intellectual being was tightened up. One of the Dominie's generalizations was: 'You must master; that is education; when you have mastered one thing you are well on the way to master all things.'"[1]

Schooldays end all too soon for the children of the poor : and the boy, literally penniless, nearly went to sea as a fisherman, actually started to work in the fields. He was saved only by the interposition of his Dominie, who appreciated his parts and brought him back to school as a pupil teacher. At this stage his dreams were of a professorship or a pulpit. His teacher, primarily interested in mathematics and the classics,

[1] *Scottish Educational Journal*, 26th September, 1919.

encouraged them: anyhow started him on the broad road of general culture and helped him there as far as he could.

But the pupil's mind soon began to take a bent, interesting in itself, not so sympathetic to his master. Through the numbers of Cassell's *Popular Educator* and *Science for all*—which he was afterwards to describe as his university—he came into touch with the revolutionary discoveries which gave to the second half of the nineteenth century its determining character and to his mind its scientific bent.

The importance of this in his development cannot be exaggerated. The trait that distinguishes MacDonald's Socialist work to-day, and has done throughout his active career, is its firm grounding in science, its background of exact study and respect for observed fact. It was his scientific studies that later compelled him to reject Liberalism on the one hand, on the other Marxism in its dogmatic forms. A clearer instance of selection, of the choice that marks off men of original mind, than this insistence on his part on providing himself with a scientific equipment, could not be found. There was nothing in his circumstances to help him; his choice disappointed his teacher; but it was made. The stimulus given by Hugh Miller had made a permanent mark on his mind. Its critical side was alert. When he read Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" it excited and stirred

him, but it is on record that he even then rejected the simplicity of George's analysis.

Lack of most of the things the comfortable think necessary; contact with the forces they often miss or forget—poetry, history, nationality, a sense of the heroic past, of the magic that lurks in all natural objects round which associations have gathered, and of the beauty of sky and sea and mountains : an early deep instinctive recognition of the dignity of labour, the decency and self-respect of simple folk—these things moulded the boy's spirit. He had to fight from the beginning : to stand alone, as few have to. This isolation shaped without thwarting a natural geniality. He had learned to be silent as well as to speak, to rule himself as well as to rule others, at an age when the well-to-do child is still in the nursery. This went on unconsciously. The conscious part of him was absorbed in the adventure of learning. His Dominie helped him, but he did most of it himself.

Of detail about these years of dawning manhood there is little to be gleaned. He gained in power in his studies, reached the point where his master had no more to teach him, and he had exhausted the resources Lossiemouth possessed in the way of books. He had begun to practise both in speaking and in writing : passed examinations with distinction : won a prize for a story in a newspaper competition, and began to strain

towards a wider world. London, and all that London meant in his imagination, called him. His teacher dreamed of a university career, but the road seemed barred by poverty. But in London, who knows? He might find a way both to learn and to earn. Undiscouraged by the failure of what looked like the first chance, he took his courage in his hands and set forth into the unknown.

One would give a good deal for a picture of MacDonald when, like Dick Whittington, and with hardly more luggage, and no cat, he came up to London with only that bright talisman of native genius to promise something bigger than a Lord Mayorship. There was a remarkable brain behind the dark curls, a remarkable tenacity of will in the firm jaw, a spark of something rarer than either in the flashing eyes: but beyond these what had he to show? He had passed examinations, written stories: he knew a good deal of science and more of politics and the life behind than many men of twice his age: but he was not twenty, had neither friends nor connections. The job that had brought him south proved to be a mare's-nest and no alternative presented itself. It is said that he knew it was a mare's-nest, and only used it to put the minds of the people he left at home at rest. Lonely, desperately poor, without a friend to whom to turn for advice or assistance, he walked the cruel streets, knew, and has surely not forgotten, what they feel like to

the Ishmael whom no man helps. But he was not going back. Rather than that, he was ready to be a bus conductor : or, a slightly less intolerable alternative, an invoice clerk in a City warehouse. The pay was miserable—a bare 12s. 6d. a week : but the warehouse was near the Guildhall Library, and there he spent his lunch-time, reading. Its hours though long left him his nights. Those nights, with the bare minimum for sleep, were spent at evening classes, more reading, correspondence classes; latterly in the laboratory of a chemist whose acquaintance he made. His work in this laboratory was the means of freeing him from the warehouse. A remarkable piece of analysis led the way to further jobs of the same kind, and left more time for study—general as well as scientific. He passed South Kensington examinations in science, and was within a few weeks of sitting for a scholarship that would have cleared the immediate future when his health broke down. The strain had been too great, even for the iron constitution of youth.

At the time, this collapse, breaking across the scientific course he had mapped out for himself and defeating him when success seemed in sight, appeared a malign stroke of fate. Now it looks almost providential. Not so to the young man on whom it fell. His scientific passion persisted, but he had to make a living somewhere else. His gifts had already struck those with whom

he came into any sort of contact, and Mr. Thomas Lough, then a Gladstonian candidate and later Gladstonian M.P. for West Islington ("He got in when I left him," is MacDonald's own reported account), offered him in 1888 the post of private secretary and a salary that, though small enough (£75 a year, rising to £100), was sufficient for his spartan needs. "Now I have attained to fortune," he wrote at the time. The work taught him much of the practical side of politics: ideas he was forming for himself.

Within the first year of being in London he had joined the Social Democratic Federation, later, the Fabian Society, of which he was an executive member for many years. In neither of these did his active mind find a home. Scientific study made the narrow dogmatism of the one impossible; native temper was incompatible with the somewhat soulless opportunism and cut and dried Collectivism of the other. He found more native sap in the movement with which Professor Thomas Davidson was associated in the body known as the New Fellowship, and in the Trades Council of which his namesake, James Macdonald, was secretary. But although he learned something from these associations and established many fruitful personal contacts, it was still from his own incessant reading that his thought was mainly fed and directed. Reading led on to writing: he began to find his feet as a journalist. When after four years' association

he finally left Mr. Thomas Lough, he was able to rely on his pen for a living. He was for a time attached to the staff of the *Weekly Despatch* when Fox Bourne was its editor, and wrote regularly for the *Echo* under Passmore Edwards, and the *Daily Chronicle* under A. E. Fletcher, besides doing free lance work of all sorts. There was a brief period when he took charge of the *Labour Leader*, the organ of the Independent Labour Party.

It was for the *Echo* that he wrote, later, that courageous and outspoken series of articles on South Africa, as he saw it, after the Boer War (published in 1902 under the title "What I saw in South Africa"), which created a profound impression and did much to change opinion. These articles show that he possessed the qualities of a first-rate journalist—vividness, compression, a sense of dramatic values. What distinguishes them above all is their truthfulness.

"It is not pleasant to tell of the mistakes of one's country and countrymen, but it is still less pleasant for me to read in my paper day after day misleading accounts of the state of South Africa. Even then I should not have written this book had I not felt that our comfortable optimism and our evident desire to banish South Africa from our minds are likely to lead to dire results. The war is ended, but the settlement has only begun. . . ."

His work during these years is also to be found in the weeklies and monthlies: traces of it, in more permanent form, are in the "Dictionary of National Biography," on whose staff he found work in some respects as congenial as ever came

his way. From the "M's" onward he is represented there, a fact which may demonstrate simply and clearly enough how complete and scholarly an education the barefoot boy of Lossiemouth had by then succeeded in acquiring for himself.

Incessant work—that is the true story of these years of preparation. He was forging his weapons. In 1888, when Keir Hardie stood as Independent Labour Candidate for Mid-Lanark, MacDonald, as Secretary of the London Branch of the Scottish Home Rule Association, wrote from Kentish Town, where he was then living, to wish him Godspeed. This was the first contact of two men who were to make the British Labour Party. Then both still believed there was a place for Labour within the Liberal Party. With neither was this belief to last long. Its reason was on the one hand a natural sympathy with the moral idealism of Gladstone, and on the other a recognition of the uninspiring character of the Trade Union movement of the time. As MacDonald worked out his own idea of Socialism as a scientific, organic conception of society, he revolted against Liberal *laissez-faire*.

The actual circumstances of the Mid-Lanark election are mainly important as preluding the foundation of the Independent Labour Party, in which he was almost from the start to play a dominating rôle. It was actually founded in 1893 in Bradford : a year later he wrote to Hardie

to express his final despair of Liberalism and to place his services at the disposal of the Independent Labour Party. Later, Hardie was to describe him as its "greatest intellectual asset."

With this step he was definitely and finally started on that Socialist political career for which he had in the previous seven or eight years been preparing himself. In his adhesion to the new I.L.P. there was nothing casual. The act had the full intention of a resolute and clear mind behind it. The instrument, forged and tested, was fitted to its work. The years between his coming up to London and standing for the first time for Southampton, as one of the twenty-eight candidates who carried the banner of Independent Labour in 1895, are years of apprenticeship, self-discipline, self-preparation : years in which the raw ardour of youth had been refined to the resolute purpose and controlled enthusiasm of a man. Years of toil and service, hardship and self-denial, their day to day face can only be guessed at from the achieved result. Some things, mostly negative, are plain enough. There were no wild oats, few idle hours, little distraction from the task in hand. No religious acolyte can endure a severer preparation than did this young Socialist, with nothing behind him but the drive of his own will, that mysteriously continuous purpose, akin to that of the creative artist, compelling him to sacrifice the present, which is his

own, to the future, which is for others. In such effort ambition has its word to say, but it is a regulated, dedicated ambition. There are few human beings conscious of power who do not seek for means through which to express the thing within them; but so far as can be judged from the evidence of writing, action and the testimony of others, the means in MacDonald's case were less interesting to him than the ends they were to serve. There were men then as there are to-day who accuse him of personal ambition; others who say he is not ambitious enough, that he lacks the final supreme egotism or self-confidence which enables a man to snatch as well as to hold. The explanation would seem to be the view, clear enough from his writings, which he holds of the nature of achievement. Nowhere is it regarded as a personal, everywhere as a corporative thing. "My ambition is to write history"—that is not an admission to be taken quite outside of its context, but of course it is there and should be there.

Thirty is the great water-shed. Xavier de Maistre was not far wrong when he said "qui n'a pas vaincu à trente ans, ne vainquera jamais." At thirty MacDonald had certainly achieved self-mastery and an equipment, the creation of his own unresting intellect, that made the future secure. At thirty too there came into his life a new influence, and, one may guess, a new experience—the experience of personal happiness.

For that there can have literally been no time before. The struggle had at first been too intense: later the devouring interest, to a highly objective young mind, of making out the hang of life, had done instead. In the young idealist of brains there is always apt to be a certain hardness of edge. At thirty, if one can hazard a guess, MacDonald may have been that rather terrifying type of egotist who never interrogates himself. If he appeared a knight in armour, he was hardly, for all his charm and his intermittent humour, the glow of his vitality, the Merciful Knight. But at the right hour he met the right woman. A hand was laid upon him that softened the rigidity, mellowed and sweetened the vital strength.

About happiness everyone feels instinctively there is something sacred. Unhappiness may be probed, dissected. So the sufferer may be helped and others learn how to avoid his sickness. But happiness neither can nor should be taken to pieces. When fighting Southampton in 1895 he received a contribution from a hitherto unknown young woman for his fighting fund. When he fell ill, after that, she wrote to him. Later, in his work in Hoxton, he met Margaret Ethel Gladstone, daughter of a distinguished chemist, the successor of Faraday as Professor at the Royal Institution, and niece to Lord Kelvin: within a few months they were engaged: in November, 1896, they married, and went to live in

3 Lincoln's Inn Fields. In "Margaret Ethel MacDonald" (1912) her husband, left alone with five children after a close companionship of fifteen years, has raised a beautiful memorial to a fine and happy woman.

The book should be read for its own quality, and as the picture of a woman noble in herself and in all her impulses and activities, who exercised a profound influence on his life. The portrait is drawn with an unfailing and moving tenderness: the sadness of its close with the death, within a single year, of his third boy, David, of his mother, and of his wife herself, is the more heart-searching because of its quiet dignity and the sense given that the loss represents no real separation. The two rings he wears on his left hand are an outer symbol of a lasting inner dedication. The biography, written a year after its subject's death, contains some of his best and most characteristic writing, and in that sense is revealing; but it is a biography, not an auto-biography. By a rare feat of craftsmanship, no less than of self-suppression, the writer hardly appears. Margaret Ethel MacDonald as herself, not as the wife of Ramsay MacDonald, is its subject: a personality candid as the day, simple, devout, unperplexed.

"To turn to her in stress and storm was like going into a sheltered haven where waters were at rest, and smiling up into the face of Heaven. Weary and worn, buffeted and discouraged, thinking of giving up the thankless strife and returning to my own house and children and household shrines, I would flee with her to my Buckinghamshire

home and my lady would heal and soothe me with her cheery faith and steady conviction, and send me forth to smite and be smitten. No one, not even I, can tell with accuracy how much of the steadiness there is in the Labour movement in this country is due to her."

Marriage brought happiness and a new companionship into his life. It enlarged his world. Mrs. MacDonald from the first and to the last gave her life to the Labour movement as generously and devotedly as did her husband. Among other things she gave to it, what no one has given since, a social centre. Especially in the ten years before he got into the House of Commons, 3 Lincoln's Inn Fields was the place to which everyone of interest who came to London wanted to be admitted, and where Socialists of all lands and all ranks were sure of a welcome that made them feel they were among friends. Holidays, too, for the first time came in to play their part in a life now rounded to full human expressiveness. And these holidays drew further and further afield as the pressure of work made them more necessary. The United States, South Africa (after the war), Canada, Australia and New Zealand, India, were visited together, in addition to journeys in Europe for International conferences. As a further means of escape there was a week-end cottage at Chesham Bois.

"When any special visitors came from abroad, she liked to take them through that country by a route of which she never tired. We ran them down to Stoke Poges, where they strolled through the church and the churchyard where the lyrical solemnity of the Elegy seems to have settled as an in-dwelling spirit. Thence we went to Chalfont St. Giles,

where in the church one still hears the footfalls of dead centuries, and in Milton's cottage the poet and his visitor Ellwood still wait to greet the reverent wanderer. Jordans, where God meets one face to face more directly than in any cathedral in the land, was the next stopping place, and then at Beaconsfield we halted at midday. The journey was continued to Great Hampden Church, where the hero of the Civil Wars is laid. . . . It is a land of majestic solemnity and magnificent romance, haunted by the shade of those who stood for the best in the life of England, Cromwell, Milton, Hampden, Penn, Burke."[1]

If play now for the first time had its place in his strenuous life, work remained the main thing both for himself and his companion. As a member of the London County Council he completed his preparatory equipment for Parliament. At the Khaki Election of 1900 no candidate who took the strong and clear anti-war line he did stood any chance of return in England. But though defeated at Leicester he was digging himself in there, and had made of its Independent Labour Party a branch only second to the parental Bradford.

Meantime, however, he was devoting most of his time and energies to a formidable and, many thought at the time, a hopeless task—the creation of the Labour Party, by bringing in the Trade Unions into politics. This was his chief work between 1899 and 1906.

The story is told with characteristic reticence and no mention of his own part in it, in the second chapter of "A Policy for the Labour Party" (Parsons, 1920). The formal steps are familiar enough. Working-class representation had been

[1] "Margaret Ethel MacDonald," p. 219.

secured in 1880; in 1893 "a real political party of Labour, a party with broad national and international views, a party which dealt with working-class problems and did not concern itself merely with the return of working men to Parliament," had been born. But this party, the Independent Labour Party, had still to get the idea of a Labour Party accepted by the Trade Union Congress, which earlier had rejected independent political representation again and again. Even after it accepted it in principle (in 1892 a parliamentary fund was created) it did nothing to carry the principle into practice. In 1900, however, a specially summoned Joint Conference of Socialist bodies (the Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Fabian Society) and Trade Unions met and formed the Labour Representation Committee. The object of this conference, as Keir Hardie put it, was "to secure a united Labour vote in support of Labour candidates and co-operation amongst them on Labour questions when returned." In other words, to create a political Labour Party.

The formation of the Labour Representation Committee might not have carried things much further. There was opposition, apathy, and not a little intriguing, and many people wanted nothing to be done. That was not the view of the man who was appointed its secretary. He intended something to be done, and had the determination, capacity for work, powers of

organization, conciliation, and concentration that, in the end, enabled him to do it. MacDonald had made up his mind that the Labour Representation Committee was to mean business, and it did. Within a few months of its birth the L.R.C. had to face a general election—the Khaki Election. Two of its fifteen candidates—Keir Hardie (Merthyr) and R. Bell (Derby) were returned. The position in the next few years, between the definitely Labour Members of Parliament (Shackleton was returned on the L.R.C. ticket at a bye-election in 1902) and the nine Lib-Labs, was exceedingly difficult. Every difficulty was exaggerated by the press, which talked incessantly about "splitting the Liberal vote." "Nor could we altogether depend upon our men. They really did not understand the position, the battle in which they were engaged or the consequences of their actions. A new machine had been created, but it had to deal with old minds." Even the three Members of Parliament themselves had to be instructed by Conference in 1903 to consult together. One of them displayed his independence, when Chairman of the L.R.C., by supporting first a Liberal and then a Unionist candidate at successive bye-elections. This, however, gave the secretary a chance to clear the air, and at the Newcastle Conference in 1903 political independence, i.e., independence of both other parties, was definitely laid down. Still, however, the Party "was not

only called a Committee; it had the limited mind of a Committee." But work went on incessantly. The Independent Labour Party, which supplied the driving force, was gathering strength again after the blows of the South African War. At the 1906 election the fruits of that work were gathered. Then twenty-nine candidates were returned on a definite Independent Labour ticket, and W. T. Stead was not alone in recognizing that a new portent had appeared in British political life. The Committee became the Labour Party. Local constituency organizations were admitted as well as Trade Unions and Socialist bodies: in 1918 the process of creating a national and not a sectional party, intended from the first by the secretary, was carried a stage further by the admission of individual "workers by hand and brain."

"The position in 1920," he wrote in that year, "is the fulfilment of the intentions of those who created the Labour Representation Committee in 1900. It took twenty years to do, but they are years whose achievements can never be dimmed in the life and history of the British Labour Movement."[1]

In 1906 the focus of his active life was shifted to the House of Commons, where, with a gap between 1918 and 1922, it was to remain. The keen eye of Joseph Chamberlain at once detected a coming man: it is on record that he heard his

[1] "A Policy for the Labour Party," Parsons.

maiden speech and sent a message of congratulation. Keir Hardie was Chairman of the new Labour Party, forty strong, with MacDonald as his right hand. But Parliamentary work, though arduous enough for anyone who took it as seriously as he did and from the first set himself to master every detail of its complicated method and procedure, did not exhaust his activities. He was Chairman of the Independent Labour Party from 1907-1910, stormy years of internal controversy, and dominant in its councils both at home and abroad. He was actively and incessantly engaged in propaganda both in speech and writing. His first book, "What I saw in South Africa" (1902), was followed in 1903 by a study of "The Zollverein and British Industry," written in connection with the Tariff Reform Campaign. He had found time, before the election, to plan out a Socialist Library, published by the Independent Labour Party, and to arrange for a series of volumes, which after 1905 appeared, year by year, under his editorship. In 1905 appeared, in this series, his own "Socialism and Society," since reprinted in numerous editions and translated into several European languages: the clearest and most definite exposition of the organic scientific view of social evolution and of evolutionary "reformist" Socialism. Its point of view may be given in a nutshell by noting the fallacious comment upon it of a French admirer who wrote in 1919

a little biographical study (Louis le Roux. *J. Ramsay MacDonald. Figures Socialistes Contemporaines. Les Argonautes*). M. le Roux criticizes what he calls " the view that ' to destroy in order to reconstruct ' is Utopian," and says that " We, the Marxians, hold that an old building cannot be transformed into a new." This building analogy is thoroughly inaccurate: the whole point of " Socialism and Society " is that society is a living thing that grows. A building cannot be transformed; a living thing grows by transformation.

" Biologically ' the negation of the existing state of things,' its ' inevitable breaking up,' its ' momentary existence ' is impossible. Here we find, as we find everywhere in the Marxian method, a lack of real guarantee (although there are many verbal guarantees) that change is progress. The biological view emphasizes the possibilities of existing society as the mother of future societies, and regards idea and circumstance as the pair from which the new societies are to spring. It gives not only an explanation of the existing state of things, but of its giving birth to a future state of things. It also views every form of existence on its actual process of movement and therefore on its perishing—very different from perishable—side. It lays the very slightest emphasis on its ' critical and revolutionary ' side, because it is mainly constructive and the idea of ' clearing before building ' is alien to its nature. Street improvements are not biological processes " (p. 115).

In 1907 appeared " Labour and the Empire " and " Socialism " in the Social Problems Series, edited by Oliphant Smeaton—an admirable statement which ought not now to be out of print. " Socialism and Government " (1909), also in the Socialist Library, is another volume which is out of print in English though obtainable in German.

His journeyings in India in 1910 were recorded in "The Awakening of India," and in 1911 appeared one of the most successful volumes in a remarkably successful series—"The Socialist Movement," in the Home University Library.

In 1911 MacDonald, re-elected for Leicester in each of the two General Elections on the Lords veto, took Keir Hardie's place as Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party. But at the time this outward success was nothing. The year was for him a terrible one, in which he walked incessantly under the shadow of death. He and Mrs. MacDonald were called back from India by the General Election.

"The year was heavy with work and sorrow. On 3rd February our little boy David died, and eight days later my mother followed him."

On 24th April, Mary Middleton, Margaret MacDonald's closest friend, died after a long illness.

"And the will to live seemed to go out of my wife. In July she fell definitely ill, with some form of blood poisoning. We returned to London and she did not rise again.

"She told us that had she to begin life again, she would pray to be allowed to live it in the same way; she commended to us the people and the causes that she had been helping, and on 8th September died, when the sun was robing itself in its setting glory and filling the room with the mournful light of early evening."

Something of what the severing of this close companionship meant can be read between the lines of the Memoir which, at her own dying behest, the bereaved husband sat down to write. Those who have known its author only since the

descent of this shattering blow have to accept the fact that a vital part of his experience, and one which had a profound influence upon his character, is hidden from them. Happiness, with men and women naturally objective rather than introspective, often deepens reserve. The very fact that feeling has found its expression stills the need of other contacts. A chapter is closed.

For the sake of his young children—the youngest a mere babe at the time—MacDonald removed from Lincoln's Inn Fields to Hampstead, where he has since made his home. He accepted the request of the Asquith Government to serve as a member of the Royal Commission that went out to India to inquire into the Civil Services—a task the more congenial that Lord Morley was then, and still is, one of his closest friends. Some of the results of this second visit are contained in his book, "The Government of India" (The Swarthmore Press), not actually published, owing to the delays of war, until 1919, though written, in all its substantial parts, before the promulgation of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

In the House of Commons the years of his leadership of the Labour Party—1911-1914—were years of extreme difficulty. There was the Parliament Act, which made effective demonstration against the Liberal Government almost impossible, while Mr. Lloyd George was

doing all he could to steal the Labour thunder. There was the Women's question, on which Labour was thoroughly sympathetic, with the result that its champions—MacDonald himself, Keir Hardie, Philip Snowden—suffered more than did opponents from interruptions at meetings. There was, though few realized it, the gradual thickening and darkening of the European sky. Those who understood, as MacDonald understood, the drift of Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy, made tremendous efforts, from 1906 to 1914, to stem that drift. In vain. In July, 1914, it flung us over into the rapids.

That story, however, requires another chapter.

THE BLACK YEARS

"Truth would you teach, or save a sinking land,
All fear, none aid you, and few understand."
Pope.

TWO extraordinarily dramatic episodes, closely connected, give to Ramsay MacDonald's political career an outline that will fascinate the historian of the future.

When in August, 1914, he refused Cabinet office, and resigned his leadership of the Labour Party, he seemed, with full awareness of what he was doing, to be committing political suicide. He took a stand which hardly anyone in his own party and very few outside it shared or understood. Within a few days he became the most vilified and unpopular man in Britain. His name was shouted from the housetops, in accents of savage loathing. To thousands of people who had hardly heard of him before he became a bogey. And the campaign then started was hardly relaxed. Fresh fuel was continually being thrown upon it. When the popular temperature seemed to be cooling down, it was raised again in the press or from the platform. There was in this a curious, inverted tribute to

some quality in the man that made it impossible to prevent people from being interested in him, even if their interest took a rancorous form. No other opponent of the war sacrificed so much: none was so vilified. At the 1918 General Election he lost his seat in Parliament. Leicester, for which he had sat since 1906, rejected him by a 14,000 majority for a renegade pacifist running on the Coalition ticket.

It looked as though the campaign had succeeded, as though the dangerous career were ended. To make assurance doubly sure, a new tactic was employed. On calumny there now succeeded silence. There was a brief break, a brief revival of war-time obloquy at the Woolwich bye-election in 1921: then silence again. So far as the average reader of the papers was aware, MacDonald was wiped off. As the General Election began to draw nearer bright persons constructed imaginary Cabinets. When their ingenuity extended to dreams of a Labour Cabinet they filled it with "patriotic" privy councillors. To suggest that there was an alternative to Mr. Henderson or Mr. Clynes or Mr. Thomas, as leader of the Labour Party, was in ordinary middle-class circles to be stared at aghast. Even by the *Nation* the highest office assigned him was Secretary for India. Aberavon, with a Coalition majority of over 6,000, was regarded by most electioneering forecast makers as hopeless for a Labour candidate.

During the contest only the *Manchester Guardian* thought the fight then worth serious mention. The speeches of other Labour leaders were reported : of MacDonald's no line appeared save in the local press. The silent pressure was still going on.

Yet the limits of its effectiveness could be registered by the curious thrill which passed over the London crowd that watched the sky signs on the night of 16th November. The fog was sweeping up and the air deadly chill when, after three hours of watching, more or less silent, suddenly there appeared on the illuminated board : " Glamorgan, Aberavon . . . Labour gain."

The cheers rang out : no need to ask " Who is Aberavon ? " There was something electrical, even in the dead letters. It was the same sort of thrill that swept over an audience in November, 1918, at the Albert Hall when, after all the billed speakers had done their part, a cry rose from the massed ranks of railwaymen and others that packed the huge hall, " Ramsay, Ramsay." It was not supposed to be safe, in November, 1918, to put that name on a London Bill. The cry rose and grew; people got on to their feet, waved their handkerchiefs, would not be denied. When at last MacDonald came forward the excitement was intense, and in it there was that odd special note of passion, something different from the ordinary polite cheering of a big meeting. Of

course the papers said nothing about it. There was no report of the speech in which, on the eve of the 1918 catastrophe, he urged the voters of the country to remember that they were the custodians of the soldiers' sacrifices. But there are some things that silence cannot kill. It was there again, this undertone of feeling, in November last. It was there in London. In Scotland and in Wales, in Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, it was far clearer and more insistent. Up and down the country, during the years of boycott, he had been speaking at great meetings, unreported in the press. Between 1918 and 1922, men and women had done some painful thinking. They had, with minds sharpened by the cruel harrow of unemployment, particularly begun to think of the war to end war, which was to make of England a home for heroes. Some of the heroes lay rotting in France, Mesopotamia, Murmansk, and Gallipoli: others had come home and found England very much as they had left it—a stepmother, not a mother. The men who had made promises had done well for themselves, but had failed those who trusted in them. Bitterly disillusionized, despairing of the faith of politicians, looking round desperately for some ideal that had not been bartered or betrayed, some man standing straight upon the truth, they saw one man who had sacrificed everything for it. Now he seemed their only hope and stay. They might have

joined once in stoning him : they knew now that the stones had come back against themselves. Whether they agreed or disagreed, understood or failed to understand, the full implications of the things he stood for, they felt that MacDonald was the one truthful man in a world of liars.

His election as leader was really a foregone conclusion, once his return was known. The new men in the party, speaking with the voices that make it representative as that of 1918-1922 was not, were determined, and they spoke for the overwhelming sense of the rank and file. It was not a question of parliamentary ability merely. In personality, character, and record he incarnated the ideals that had won victories at the polls.

So, within the space of less than a week, the tables were completely turned. The silence was broken. The press was beaten. It had to bow its head, as gracefully as it knew how, before the accomplished fact. The slate was cleaned : it was suggested that the tradition of pre-1914 days was resumed. A few voices, such as that of the *Daily Telegraph,* recalled sadly that there had been no recantation, that MacDonald had never receded an inch from the position of August, 1914. But the general effort was " Forgive and forget." Only here and there a timid, shamefaced, uncertain recognition glimmers through of the meaning of this extraordinary episode. It has been obscured by

MacDonald's own intellectual ability and the ease with which he at once established himself as a commanding House of Commons figure. Really it is such an illustration as the optimist badly needs in our times of the fact that the democracy is by no means as hopeless as it is painted. Hardly yet do we comprehend the full meaning of the moral nausea that sent the Coalition—and above all Mr. Lloyd George—reeling. But it is to misread the most significant event of our time to attribute the debacle of 1922 to one specific immediate event. The Tory Conference following on the Græco-Turkish war threat was the occasion only. The cause lay far deeper. Obscurely but profoundly the nation felt that its soul was being soiled. Not material so much as moral suffering roused the new electorate. They were sick to the soul of shams and stunts, and of the "artful dodger." They demanded an end of lying, chicanery, and "cleverness."

In the case of the majority, the feeling was blind and negative. This aspect Mr. Bonar Law understood and interpreted well enough. Honesty was his best card; no one minded much if stupidity and selfishness went with it. But there was a minority that both felt more deeply and expressed itself more clearly. The four million odd who voted Labour and whom Ramsay MacDonald now represents were not reacting simply to unemployment and hard times. They

knew what they were doing when they sought and lifted up out of the darkness the man who through years had paid the price of adherence to principle. They were asserting the truth expressed by Burke when he said that the principles of politics are those of morality enlarged, as well as repudiating the shame put upon the nation by Mr. Lloyd George.

The dramatic aspect of this change is obvious. But it is worth looking at a little more closely, since the seven years between the two big scenes —the scene of resignation and of restoration—are a searchlight on character of the most severely testing kind, and have, moreover, a great deal to tell us of the new force in British politics—the awakened working class. The press, both in its speech and in its silences, endeavoured to present MacDonald merely as a pacifist. The reason was that to call a man a pacifist was the surest way to discredit him, and to discredit MacDonald was desirable in itself. It was desirable because he was recognized to be dangerous. Not to the successful prosecution of the war. That was the excuse, safely alleged because there was nothing in it. In so far as success in war meant anything, was connected with any of its professed objects, MacDonald and those who stood with him might, had his counsel prevailed, have secured it. The danger he represented was quite a different one. The exceptional difficulties under which he had to lead the Labour Party

during 1911 under the shadow of the Parliament Act—when its minority position could only have been used, in opposition to Mr. Asquith's government, to let the Tories in to destroy the social legislation accomplished and restore the House of Lords veto to destroy any that might be secured in the future—did not blind intelligent people to the fact that under him the Labour Party was capable of becoming a menace to the established order. Press direction is much more intelligent than it wishes to appear, once its motive is grasped. They knew quite well what they were about when they contrasted what they called " sane " and " safe " Labour leaders with him. They knew that he stood for Socialism as an intelligent process of transformation, and that he had the brains and the will to set it going. They might play, alternately, the note of his " Conservatism " and that of his " extremism," but they recognized quietness of manner as the mark of unyielding purpose, a purpose too coherent and clear to need frenzy in expression.

The working classes to a large extent knew this too. They were stampeded, for a moment, by war passion; but they soon began to recover, assisted by profiteering, Munitions Acts, conscription, and Secret Treaties. In spite of Dora and all her appendages, MacDonald never lost his platform except in London. Gradually indeed he strengthened his hold. As the meaning of his sacrifice in 1914 became understood, a pro-

cess was set going which neither vilification nor boycott could arrest: which both, indirectly, accelerated, their motive once understood: which issued in the triumph of 1922. But that triumph is misinterpreted if it is regarded merely as the vindication of pacifism. It was something bigger, including but transcending that; it was the assertion by the working class of their faith in their chosen champion.

Now to look back. Most people nowadays take a painful interest in "foreign affairs." They have to. Foreign affairs are so obviously our own affairs. We are hopelessly tied up in them. Before the war this was not the case. To most people, even to politicians and close readers of the papers, foreign policy was a sealed book. August, 1914, came upon them as a shattering shock. They argued, talked about the fourteen days, as revealed in white and blue, red and green and orange books, but the fourteen years which created and conditioned these fourteen days meant nothing. MacDonald was not one of these. He had been abroad constantly, between 1896 and 1914: had visited South Africa, India, Australia: was in close touch with politics and parties on the Continent, a big figure in the International Socialist movement. He knew what British foreign policy looked like to

the foreigner. He had criticized it insistently at home. In relation to Russia, in relation to the Balkans, in relation to Egypt and India, in relation to France, he had opposed Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons and outside. The Labour Party under his leadership, since 1911, and the small knot of left wing Radicals who have since joined it, were constantly alert, critical: they warned an unheeding public of danger—danger in the unknown commitments of the Entente and its possible Russian entanglements. They tried to get a real understanding with Germany, not because they loved Germany, but because they desired peace. The warning of Agadir was not lost on them. They knew the quicksands.

MacDonald in particular was in the closest touch with fact and opinion both at home and abroad. His constant journeys, though incidentally pleasurable, were all undertaken with sternly practical objects. Thanks to an indefatigable industry and great powers of observation he had, in 1914, a better working knowledge of the world he lived in than anyone in the Cabinet. He had studied the history of other countries as well as his own. He had a strong sense of geography in the wide sense. He had visited every European country save Russia, and knew pretty well all there was to be known about them, except their languages. He knew the personnel of governments and of oppositions, the editors

and the correspondents, the business men before and behind the scenes, the rulers visible and invisible. He had been in India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States. He knew what the people were thinking and doing, as well as what the press said they were thinking and doing. Everywhere he had come into contact with the men who really counted. He knew them at home as well as abroad, was in touch with Haldane and Fisher as well as Balfour and Lloyd George—and thanks to this knowledge was without illusions. Wilfred Blunt in his diary records a visit from him on 22nd July, 1914, in which he expressed "no high opinion of Grey's intelligence" and a "mean opinion of Lloyd George."

Knowing the facts he also knew that his knowledge was confined to a handful. To some extent the Independent Labour Party was kept instructed, and was animated from end to end by a passionate hatred of war; but the Labour Party as a whole was mainly absorbed in industrial questions. In 1914 these were specially serious and pressing. The mass of the electorate was serenely unaware of the foreign danger. There was an obvious crisis about Ireland: the Tory Party was backing armed rebellion. The gun running, the Curragh incident, Bonar Law's association with Ulster rebellion, the breakdown of the Conference—this filled the forefront of the stage. The general psychological atmosphere

was favourable to militarism. The militant suffrage movement, syndicalist and direct action propaganda, Unionist drilling and arming and armed resistance in Ireland—these things were symptoms of a very dangerous and inflammable state of opinion. Against it the Liberal government and its supporters had nothing to set. The opposition to Imperialism which had created the anti-war party in 1900-01 had petered out. After the death of C.B., Liberal Imperialism had captured the party, and its prophets—Grey, Asquith, and Haldane—were in control. Grey's Persian policy, with its acquiescence in everything done by Russia, had, though this had been denied in the House, tied us hand and foot to France. McKenna had fanned the Big Navy panic: there was nothing there to stand against the ignorant anti-Germanism of Winston Churchill. Lloyd George talked peace at times. but his Mansion House speech in 1911 showed where he would be found at a crisis. There was, and MacDonald certainly knew it, no Liberal opinion on which to build resistance to a Liberal war.

Nevertheless, some of those who with him formed the first British neutrality committee to resist the frenzied incitements of the *Times* before the crash, believed that if not a majority, still a solid body of opinion would be behind them. He never thought that. Outside of the Independent Labour Party, only a handful of

those who had been pacifists in time of peace found themselves able to resist the crowd emotion that stampeded the nation so soon as war looked possible. The neutrality committee, with one or two exceptions, went with the crowd. When they found themselves in danger of being alone, they bolted for safety. In the bitterness of the attacks later made by some of them on MacDonald there is something like hatred for one whose consistency, where they had wavered, was an unforgivable reproach. They turned round. He did not. He had condemned the policy leading up to the war. When it produced its fruits he condemned it still, and the fruits with it. If no one agreed with him then, nevertheless his judgment stood. War was an unnecessary crime, whether waged by Tories or Liberals. If very few of those who had opposed the Tory Boer war were prepared to oppose a Liberal war, he was; a holy war was a contradiction in terms. What was going to happen to himself as the result of his action was not what interested him.

As to what that was likely to be he was under no illusion. His choice, as crucial and revealing as a man can be called upon to make, was made with open eyes. There are so many stories of the hot hectic days of the end of July and opening of August, 1914, that it is hard to disentangle a coherent narrative—wisest, perhaps, not to try. There are, however, one or two well authenticated fragments, bearing on his part in it, that may be

worth recording, in order that, at a later date, and with fuller information, they may be fitted into a complete picture.

The Cabinet sat continuously. On the Sunday, 3rd August, Ramsay MacDonald, so Mr. Masterman has recently reminded us, was sent for. He could have come away, it is well known, a Minister designate. He did not.

He made his way to Downing Street, in the late afternoon. Parliament Street was crowded. In the midst of the crowd, unrecognized and unnoticed, he ran into Lord Morley. Morley asked him what line he was taking. "I am to have nothing to do with it." "Neither shall I," was the reply. Morley went on to warn him there was a White Book to be published which "will blow us all out of the water." MacDonald inquired whether it contained all the truth. "Nothing like it," was the answer. "Then," said MacDonald, "I don't mind." The story goes on to recount how, later in the evening of the same direful day, he was present at a gathering of a certain Cabinet circle. By then the die had been cast. War, he was told, was inevitable: it was believed, however, that it would be most unpopular. "Rubbish," was his retort. "It will be the most popular war this country ever engaged in. Look out of the windows now and you will see the people beginning to go mad."

Late at night as he prepared to go home he and Lloyd George, so the story runs, stood

together for a moment to listen to the strokes of midnight sounding from Big Ben. "George, that's the end of a volume, the end of an epoch," said MacDonald, as he turned away.

One thing this story gives us. What pre-occupied him in those terrible hours was not himself or what might happen to him. He was not striking an attitude: he was trying to see the truth. A European war was a bigger fact than the ruin of his career or of anyone else's. It might be the end of him. That was not the aspect that struck him. "It's the end of an epoch." One cannot get, from any of those who profess to know the ins and outs of this dread period, any details, authentic or convincing, about his personal thoughts or feelings; anything that suggests the pre-occupation with his own career that even a quite unambitious man might have felt. Never, in subsequent speech or writing, did he reduce the crisis to those terms. Search what he said and wrote then and later. That personal note never sounds. He knew what he had to do and did it; he obeyed his conscience. To that he never refers. Frequent references subsequently to the fact that the I.L.P. has been justified, that it was right: never any suggestion that it was right because it followed his lead, although that is the case. From him there has come no self-explanation, no self-justification. The facts are there. Their importance, to him—this is the impres-

sion given by all his speeches, all his articles—is historical, political, psychological, never personal. They must be seen and understood. Not in order that his actions may be approved, but in order that men's minds may have the freedom of dealing with things as they are. That is always the note. In itself it is remarkable, and in that it never varies, is never submerged in anything personal. No attacks ever forced him into the position of explaining "Why I am right." Rightness, in itself, not as attached to him, is his interest, his concern. He acted as he had to act. Because the facts were so.

This is not a normal attitude. Men who take unpopular lines nearly always feel a need to justify themselves. In MacDonald's case, his war psychology can never be understood except on the assumption that his view was, from the beginning to the end, an objective one. The personal vehicle of objective idea is, with him, secondary. So much so that it is difficult to detach it.

One indirect approach, of singular interest, can be found by contrasting his action with that of Sir John Simon. Sir John thought the Government's action wrong, as he did. He was on the point of resigning. He further agreed in thinking that public opinion would support the Government. But the conclusion he drew was that resistance was useless: there remained only

the effort, inside the fort, to keep the Government straight. There his low temperature imagination deceived him. A war government cannot be kept straight: certainly not one composed as was that of 1914. Tory pressure had already been applied, in Mr. Bonar Law's famous letter: the war was to be "Liberal" only a year in name, far less in fact, as the Secret Treaties proved. For MacDonald that resistance might be "useless" in the pragmatic sense did not finish the matter. No Calvinist accepts that view: no system of morals worth the name can be built upon it. It is the philosophy of "Might is right." If wrong is ever to be resisted effectively it must be resisted when resistance seems ineffective. Only so can moral opinion ever be built, and the building of moral opinion is the justification of politics and politicians. The reason for protest is not expectation of success but a moral compulsion. Deny it and your society has no higher sanction than its police. That is the first point. The second is almost equally indicative of the difference between the two men. Ramsay MacDonald gauged the temperature of the country far better than Sir John did; his psychology was more accurate and more adventurous. He had heard the people in the streets and felt the madness rising in them. He saw the herd stampeding. Further, from outside he understood the Cabinet better than did Simon from inside. He knew that they could not be

trusted to run a war efficiently even from the militarist point of view, far less to maintain the principles on which a decent peace could be secured. It was not inside the Government but outside that those principles were to be fought for.

Power to act on principle in a crisis is no accident. MacDonald did not "happen" to stand firm when others, who had previously agreed with him, ran away. His doing so is one of those shafts which exceptional circumstances sometimes enable the observer to sink into the deeper reaches of character and conduct.

When the House of Commons re-assembled on 3rd August the Labour Party had already met and discussed the situation. MacDonald as leader had put his view and carried the party with him; the main points in the statement he was to make were agreed upon. Remember, however, that in 1914 Labour mustered but forty odd members. One, Philip Snowden, was abroad, in Australia.

The atmosphere was from the first tense, electric. For the first time since the historic Home Rule debates of 1893 there were close set rows of chairs placed over the floor of the House. The profound gravity of the Premier, as he took his seat, and the solitary presence in the Gallery of the Russian Ambassador, were noted by the press. There were cheers for various Ministers: notably for Churchill, Grey, and the Ministers with whose possible resignations rumour had been

busy. Questions were bustled out of the way; the Moratorium Bill passed with lightning rapidity. The atmosphere was prepared for the Foreign Secretary, who for a long time, with the art of a skilled dramatist, kept his hearers in a state of torturing uncertainty. Gradually, however, as the "obligation of honour" argument developed, the temperature rose. His peroration, though cold and clear enough in phrasing, carried the effect further: the sense of crisis, of a gage already thrown, of impending war. Bonar Law accepted war—as his letter had already more than done. When he sat down, after referring, like Grey, to Ireland as the "one bright spot" and adding another—the Dominions—he left the temperature still higher. A new psychology had begun to work: war atmosphere filled the House of Commons. It was in this atmosphere, heightened by Redmond, that MacDonald rose. There were some interruptions, but "in his firm yet temperate manner" he compelled attention. "Real courage there, the courage to stand alone," wrote P.W.W. in the *Daily News* next day. The speech is historic:

"I should, had circumstances permitted, have preferred to remain silent this afternoon. But circumstances do not permit of that. I shall model what I have to say on the two speeches we have listened to, and I shall be brief. The right hon. gentleman, to a House which in a great majority is with him, has delivered a speech the echoes of which will go down in history. The speech has been impressive; however much we may resist the conclusion to which he has come, we have not been able to resist the moving

character of his appeal. I think he is wrong. I think the Government which he represents and for which he speaks is wrong. I think the verdict of history will be that they are wrong. We shall see. The effect of the right hon. gentleman's speech in this House is not to be its final effect. There may be opportunities, or there may not be opportunities, for us to go into detail; but I want to say to this House, and to say it without equivocation, if the right hon. gentleman had come here to-day and told us that our country is in danger, I do not care what party he appealed to, or to what class he appealed, we should be with him and behind him. If this is so we will vote him what money he wants. Yes, and we will go further. We will offer him ourselves, if the country is in danger. But he has not persuaded me that it is, and I am perfectly certain when his speech gets into cold print to-morrow, he will not persuade a large section of the country. If the nation's honour were in danger, we would be with him. There has been no crime committed by statesmen of this character, without those statesmen appealing to their nation's honour. We fought the Crimean War because of our honour. We rushed to South Africa because of our honour. The right hon. gentleman is appealing to us to-day because of our honour. There is a third point. If the right hon. gentleman could come to us and say that a small European nationality like Belgium is in danger and could assure us he is going to confine the conflict to that question, then we would support him. But what is the use of talking about coming to the aid of Belgium when, as a matter of fact, you are engaging in a whole European war which is not going to leave the map of Europe in the position it is in now. The right hon. gentleman said nothing about Russia. We want to know about that. We want to try to find out what is going to happen, when it is all over, to the power of Russia in Europe, and we are not going to go blindly into this conflict without having some rough sort of idea of what is going to happen. Finally, so far as France is concerned, we say solemnly and definitely that no such friendship as the right hon. gentleman describes between one nation and another could ever justify one of those nations entering into war on behalf of the other. If France is really in danger, if, as the result of this, we are going to have the power, genius, and civilization of France removed from European history, then let him say so. But it is an absolutely impossible conception which we are talking about to endeavour to justify that which the right hon. gentleman has foreshadowed. I do not know but I feel that the feeling of the House is against us. I have been through this before and 1906 came as part recompense. It will come

again. We are going to go through it all. We will go through it all. So far as we are concerned, whatever may happen, whatever may be said about us, whatever attacks may be made upon us, we will take the action that we will take of saying that this country ought to have remained neutral, because in the deepest parts of our hearts we believe that that was right and that alone was consistent with the honour of the country and the traditions of the party now in office."

Reading the speech to-day, it sounds quiet, restrained, studiously low in tone. In the heated and electric atmosphere of Westminster on that afternoon in August, with the sense of straining crowds outside, Bank Holiday crowds with no Bank Holiday feeling, the quiet words uttered in his clear, deep, measured accents had a challenging effect that can hardly be recaptured without it. After the high-pitched emotionalism of Redmond there came, with him, a complete break—the passage from inspired rhetoric to grim reality. "I think he is wrong." No attack in violent terms could have reverberated more sharply than that quiet assertion of a view running counter to the sense of the vast majority, stirred by Grey to a passion the deeper that it was uncomprehended as yet, derived from instinctive unknown roots. "We will go through it all." That was the voice of destiny, of a Cassandra who saw her own doom but cannot have seen its far fulfilment in ultimate vindication. At that hour not even MacDonald himself can have known how much he would have indeed to go through, nor how solitary was to be his passage: but if he had, he would have

faced it with the same austere determination, the same sober sense of obligation.

That evening the ultimatum was delivered, and within a very few days, the storm broke. The publication of the White Paper produced, as Mr. Illingworth had promised, more "revulsions" than that which drove Mr. Massingham to express in the *Daily News* his recantation of opposition, without waiting for week-end opportunity in the *Nation*. Before then Mr. H. G. Wells had rushed forward to proclaim that "every sword drawn against Germany is a sword drawn for peace." Within a few days the "Holy War" campaign was in full blast.

On the day after the ultimatum (5th August) the Labour Party Executive met at a specially summoned meeting in the House of Commons and passed a resolution of which the first part expressed condemnation of the policy which produced the war, and asserted that Labour's first duty was to "secure peace at the earliest possible moment on such conditions as will provide the best opportunities for the re-establishment of amicable feelings between the workers of Europe." On the very night of the adoption of this resolution by the Executive, however, a majority of the Labour M.P.'s opposed the proposal of the Chairman of the Parliamentary Party that he should read its terms in his speech that evening in the House. MacDonald resigned his leadership, and Arthur Henderson, hitherto

in agreement with him, succeeded to it. Almost immediately after, both the Executives, that of the Parliamentary Party and of the National Labour Party, agreed to take part in the recruiting campaign, and so endorsed the Government's war policy. There was a complete break-away. Only his I.L.P. colleagues (Keir Hardie, F. W. Jowett, Tom Richardson and, on his return, Philip Snowden) stood with MacDonald. He passed out into the wilderness, in which he was to remain for the next eight years.

As descriptive of his isolation, this phrase is accurate enough. It might, however, convey a false impression. He by no means felt his duty exhausted in making his protest. It was not the salvation of his own soul, the assertion of his own sense of rectitude, the satisfaction of his own conscience he was interested in, as his conduct showed. War did not for him, as for the Jingo, suspend private judgment and private duty.

To go into the wilderness alone and there to have kept silence would have been comparatively easy. Had he done that, had he followed the advice of his friends, he would have escaped most of the obloquy that was his share. But from the first moment when the danger of war came near he looked beyond it—as his writings in the *Labour Leader*, etc., show—to the peace that must follow, however long war lasted; and he foresaw from the first that it would last long.

From the first he was conscious of a duty to others : to the soldiers and to the people at home, to the community. He had to make them understand, at whatever cost, what was happening. That came first, and that precluded silence. All his deep grounded faith in intelligence as the motive force in common life impelled him to that. Therefore he wrote an article in which he explained the position. It appeared in the *Labour Leader* in the week after the publication of the White Paper, and created a tremendous storm. In this he laid stress upon the fact, now universally admitted but then revolutionary, that the foreign policy of the years before the war had made peace impossible for us, however hard Sir Edward Grey might have striven for it in the last fourteen days. Both by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary the truth as to that foreign policy had been withheld from the people. "The European war is the result of the existence of the Entente and the Alliance, and we are in it as a consequence of Sir Edward Grey's policy. . . . Half a dozen men brought Europe to the brink of the precipice, and Europe fell over it because it could not help itself." Six years later Lloyd George admitted that the statesmen of Europe stumbled into war; but to say so at the time was treason and treachery. "I have been reminded," wrote MacDonald at the end of his article, "of one of those sombre judgments which the prophet who lived in evil

times uttered against Israel. 'A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land, the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?' Aye, what will ye do in the end thereof?"

The ideas in this article were the ideas which led to the foundation, in these early weeks, of that tiny and at first wildly unpopular body, the Union of Democratic Control. They were the ideas which MacDonald expressed in articles and speeches, so soon as it was possible to make speeches. Out of them has grown that new comprehension of foreign policy which surprises anyone who addresses a working-class audience to-day. He began sowing the seed at once, and was stoned for it.

But to expose and reveal the causes of the war covered only half his duty as he conceived it. He had been in the House of Commons since 1906, and in close contact with the men in control there. He knew their minds, their outlook, and distrusted them profoundly. So far as the war itself went he believed that the soldiers, the rank and file, would see us through; but he did not believe that the politicians would know how to utilize their sacrifices. War was an unmitigated evil, but no man of his courage and honesty stares at its Medusa face and allows it to turn his mind to stone. Beyond war there was peace, and for peace every civilian bore a

responsibility. "When a war is actually upon us," he wrote in the *Socialist Review* for October-December, 1914 (it was then a quarterly); "when our friends are dying in the trenches and being mown down on the battlefields; when Europe is in the melting pot and our own country is not quite safe from attack, a set of problems different from those which faced us at the outbreak of the war have to be dealt with." The situation was not the same as that of the Boer War. Though he could take no part in recruiting meetings, since that involved an acceptance of the official justification of war, he was not prepared outright to condemn every Socialist who took a different view. Mere standing aside to criticize was not enough. From the first he wanted to help. None who has seen or heard him need be told that MacDonald is not naturally a Tolstoyan but a fighter. He understood the impulse that sent many an ardent young Socialist and pacifist into the ranks, especially at the time of the Marne retreat. His eldest son served three years with the Friends' Medical Corps. He himself went out to Belgium to join Dr. Hector Munro's Ambulance Corps. He was brought back by reason of a very curious intrigue, in which one of the most notorious rogues of our time—not Horatio Bottomley—was mixed up. The discovery of this made him finally decide that a harder task was assigned to him. The hue and cry against him was loud and envenomed; he was not going

to do anything that looked like running away. He came back and settled down to what then looked like a long and hopeless fight, foredoomed to defeat. Mr. Masterman has recorded his impression of MacDonald, with whom he worked on war-time Unemployment Committees, as a man whose personal career was ended. Perhaps he thought so himself. But not his public obligations. That point is clear in the *Socialist Review* article already referred to. "We have to protect the opinion to which the country will have to trust later on from being misled and stampeded; we must put the true side, the facts, to our own people at any rate." At first that part of the task was subordinate. "But amidst all this surfeit of outrage, destruction, hate, and carnage, the Socialist must keep his international spirit. . . . Let Socialism take the place deserted by the Churches and stand by moral wisdom. . . . One's belief in democracy does not mean one's shouting with the crowd even if every professor in the country and every parson in the land are packed in the crowd and hoarse bawling the catchwords of the crowd. The Socialist democrat has another purpose in life than that. The people cannot always remain alien from the truth. Let Socialists think of the morrow as well as the day.

> Truth crushed to earth will rise again,
> The eternal years of God are hers.

That is the strength of our movement. Let us

not evacuate our citadels because the fiendish bugles of war are blowing."

"We will go through it all," he had said in the House of Commons; and of himself it was true, though when he spoke he could have had no adequate conception of what it was to mean. The press, London and provincial, became a pillory. Northcliffe and Horatio Bottomley were in an unholy alliance to destroy him, and stuck at nothing in the effort. The law of libel was effectively suspended: there was no protection against slander for anyone in his position. Papers organized gangs of rowdies to break up his meetings. Social ostracism followed public obloquy. London hostesses struck him off their lists: timid private acquaintances hesitated "out of consideration for other people's feelings" to invite him: the well-bred patriotic visitors to Lossiemouth turned him out of the golf club. The icy hostility of his own party was harder to forgive, and the changed faces of old friends. What he has said of Hardie in his introduction to W. Stewart's Life, was true of himself. "'No one can ever know,' he once said to me, 'what suffering a man has to endure by misrepresentation.' . . . But sorest of all was the wound which the war made upon him. Like every intelligent man who kept his head he saw that the most worthless elements in the country would ride the whirlwind, that the people would be worked up into a state of mind that would

not only defy every appeal to reason but would prolong the agony and settle it, as all wars have hitherto been settled, by crushing debts, ruined ideals and a peace which would only be a truce to give time for the sowing of new seeds of war. . . . He saw the Treaty of Versailles before 1915 was very far spent, and he was content to endure and wait. That is not how he was wounded. The deadly blow was given by the attitude of old colleagues."

"He was content to endure and wait." Of Hardie this was true; he was near the end. For himself, there was a harder, more strenuous task. Week in, week out, in the House of Commons and on the platform—for the platform was never let go, though there were tremendous difficulties: the risk of scenes, stones, wild disorder: the refusal of halls, the certainty of misreporting—he fought to bring the people back to the truth. The "citadel" was never abandoned, though the sky grew darker and thicker with opprobrium and ill-repute.

To tell the story in detail would serve no purpose. The bitterest and most painful gash—that within the Labour Party itself—has been closed over, and MacDonald would be the last man to re-open it. His severest standards have always been for himself, not for his colleagues.

The dark years had their compensations. After the first shock, the first break away, the ranks of his own Independent Labour Party

stood staunch as steel, and gradually fair-minded men and women from outside came in to join them, notably in the fight on conscription. In the House the "pacifist group" was numerically Liberal rather than Labour; after Hardie's death W. C. Anderson joined MacDonald, Snowden, Jowett, and Richardson, and associated with them were C. P. Trevelyan, Arthur Ponsonby, H. B. Lees Smith, R. C. Lambert, S. Arnold, and one or two others who have since joined the I.L.P.; but its driving force and spearhead thrust came from MacDonald. He bore the brunt.

Yet out of this general, bitter unpopularity sprung a new and special popularity. One may call it that. It was really something deeper. A personal devotion, a reverence almost, with a new note of intensity in it quite different from the partisan adherence, with more or less outspoken reservations, given to most political leaders. In Scotland and the North generally this was specially marked. This feeling actually gained force from misrepresentation, as men felt that one man was being crucified in the cause of truth.

It was fed too from another source. In Woolwich in February, 1921, as in Aberavon in November, 1922, ex-service men made themselves into a sort of bodyguard for him. This began early, as the men in the trenches found in his speeches and writings, not in any official pronouncements, a comprehension and expression of the ideals for which they believed they were

enduring the horrors of modern trench warfare. He stood for the peace they died for: he understood their sufferings. He understood too well. He had been through the furnace of personal affliction in 1911, and it had smitten him down, blanching his hair and lining his face with pain, setting him apart. But between 1914 and 1918 there rested on him the tragic burden of a man who knows his own pain generalized over a continent: of a man proud of his country who has to be ashamed of it.

No one who heard him at the Leicester conference in 1918, speaking at the time of the great German offensive, can forget the tones of his voice when in a speech that reminded one correspondent of the "deep and sombre eloquence of a Bright" he likened the battle to the conflict between the archangels and God Himself as described by Milton, and made his hearers see the "hot and bloody faces on the Somme, only fanned in death by the wings of the angel"; or doubt that the overclouding of his own career was nothing in his mind to set in the scale with the tragedy of Europe. His overwhelming sense of duty made his helplessness acutely painful; but no pain, no buffeting prevented his going on trying.

Socialists are frequently charged with an insufficient regard for freedom. The charge would be hard to support from facts. Certainly it was due in the main to the I.L.P., and above

all to MacDonald himself, that, after the first few months of the war, a free platform was secured and never let go. Up and down the country from the early days to the last he addressed meetings. At first there was often trouble; but he always knew how to deal with that, and never refused to go, however dark the prospects were held to be. Sometimes there was actual physical danger: always the hostile demonstrations that test a speaker's nerves. It was an ordeal, but from the first he faced it. Had he been silent, ignorance and hate would have been unchecked, and free speech gone by the board. That he refused to allow. Gradually the disturbing elements grew less and less. The difficulty about halls, frequently refused by the local authorities on the pretext that they feared a row, was overcome. In Bradford, Glasgow, and elsewhere cinemas were purchased by the I.L.P., run as such during the week, and reserved on Sundays for meetings. By 1915 the open platform had been won so far as indoor meetings out of London went. London, with the Northcliffe and Bottomley press playing full upon it, took longer, and the great battle for the right of free speech there was what was afterwards known as the Battle of Plumstead, in 1918. A great free speech demonstration was arranged on Plumstead Common on 31st August. Ramsay MacDonald came down from Lossiemouth to speak; and in spite of extraordinary efforts made

to break up the meeting, and wild perversion in the press next day, he did speak. The occasion illustrated the way in which the soldiers felt about him. Scottish soldiers arriving at Victoria on leave on the morning of the 31st heard that he was to speak and that there might be trouble. At once they formed themselves into a bodyguard and went down to Plumstead Common to defend their hero against any who tried to do him harm. There was stone throwing, some broken heads, a very narrow escape on his own part: but the meeting was held, the speech delivered, free speech defended. There exists a photograph—taken by the *Daily Mirror*—which gives some idea of the vast crowd, and also shows it at a stage when, MacDonald himself speaking, order and silence prevailed over the human sea.

So far as Labour was concerned the Russian Revolution and the Stockholm project mark a turning point in opinion. The men of Havelock Wilson's Union who prevented Ramsay MacDonald from sailing to Russia in 1917 and the later refusal of passports for Stockholm in 1917 deflected the possible course of history. Had he gone to Russia, had Stockholm been attended by British delegates, subsequent events might have been very different. As it was, the Labour Party conference in 1917 showed the swing of opinion. MacDonald conquered an audience that was to a large extent hostile when he began. The incident of Mr. Henderson's sojourn on the mat

brought him over to the view that the day of Labour participation in war government ought to be ended. By January, 1918, trouble in shipyards and munition shops had pushed things on a further stage.

Though Stockholm had been stamped on, the hope of International Socialist action had not been abandoned. It was at a meeting of inter-allied Socialists in London on 23rd February, 1918, that Ramsay MacDonald lifted up and reiterated the expression, originally used in the House of Commons in 1917, which perhaps got him into more trouble than any other, though at this distance it is hard to recapture the psychology that explains why.

"Problems which seemed insoluble six months ago have been found when faced with courage and goodwill by men determined to understand them, capable of very easy solution. I hope that what we have done to-day will not be 'too late.'

"But there is one thing essential. Our German friends must now speak. I once used the expression 'German friends' and those of you who come from abroad have no idea of the storm that has been blowing about my head ever since. I tell you that when victory comes, if it is to be victory worth having, alongside of us, sharing in our victory, will be men like Liebknecht, Haase and Bernstein. Those are my German friends, and they will remain my German friends in spite of all the blackguardly things that can be said by an Imperialist and Jingo press. The effect of our pronouncement to-day is going to be the effect of a miracle, touching their dumb lips so that Europe may hear from them the response to the message that the Allied democracies have decided through us to-day to address to them.

"When we have an International there is no going away from it defeated. We are going to sit there, to reason there, to persuade there, to argue there, for a month if necessary; but at the end it is to be agreement."

In June the Labour Party put its house in order by passing a revised and definitely Socialist constitution and admitting as individual members workers both by hand and brain—thus carrying to fruition the work Ramsay MacDonald had begun years earlier. But Labour Ministers, notably J. R. Clynes, were still in the Government. They were called out before the Election, and the Party went to the polls largely on its policy of a democratic settlement.

For that Election all the old poison gas was worked up and as much of it as possible concentrated on Leicester, where Ramsay MacDonald had, as the *Manchester Guardian* put it at the time, to meet such a barrage of lies as had never been put up against any candidate. It was successful. He was defeated by an immense majority by a renegade peace man running on a Coalition ticket. This fate was shared by everyone who had been closely associated with him in Parliament and out of it. The triumph of the Northcliffes and Bottomleys seemed complete. On the slogans of "Hanging the Kaiser" and "Making Germany Pay," the "man who won the war" had a blank cheque to lose the peace. Incidentally, Parliament, shorn of many of its ablest figures, waterlogged by the vast composite Coalition troupe, in the next four years almost dropped out of public attention and nearly achieved public contempt. The Labour Party, though increased in numbers, had

declined in quality, and did little or nothing to redeem it.

This parliamentary weakness was a very serious handicap to MacDonald in the big controversy which now arose to absorb much of his strength and energy. Thanks, however, to the way in which he conducted it, it ultimately proved the means by which he at once saved and conquered the Labour Party. Outside his own party the whole Communist fight was very imperfectly understood and hardly reported: a fact which contributed to give the false impression that he was out of business, that his defeat at Leicester showed he was down and out. To some men the 1918 election might have seemed a *coup de grâce:* an excuse for putting up shutters and retiring to that "cot" beside a rill for which most hard fighters and workers have a secret shamefaced yearning—a yearning which he has often admitted to sharing. Not so to him. He was in the thick of the fight all the time, doing hard if thankless work which showed positively, as plainly as the conduct of the Labour Party in the House did negatively, that he was the indispensable man.

The 1917 Russian Revolution sent an electric shock throughout the Labour movements of the world. The Bolshevik coup of November in the same year had even more violent repercussions. The grudging attitude of the Allied Governments to the new Russia developed into

positive hostility to the Bolsheviks: intervention, the support of every sort of reactionary, roused passionate resentment in all sections of the Labour Party, especially in the I.L.P. Sympathy with Russia, recognition of the mighty significance of the fall of Tsardom, passed over into a demand for imitation of Bolshevik ideas and tactics. Dogmatic Marxism, long discredited in the British movement, was once again put forward as a new and "advanced" doctrine. Democracy was discredited everywhere, and the extreme left found itself at one with the extreme right in deriding it as out-worn, and proclaiming dictatorship as the instrument of the class war. Support for this attitude was largely sentimental, but it appeared in the most diverse quarters and guises. Within the Independent Labour Party conscientious objectors shed their objection to violence when exercised against the bourgeoisie, individualists clamoured for dictatorship, romantic idealists felt that they must range themselves on the left, and the left of course was the newest brand of Russian Marxism.

Much sincere feeling was mixed up in this: more feeling than thought or knowledge. To oppose it at the time was to be labelled as a reactionary and libelled as the ally of governments. To the student of MacDonald's character his steady and finally triumphant opposition is worth the most careful study. It ought to clear

him, with any candid inquirer, of the charge of demagogy so freely levelled against any working-class leader. He utterly refused to say the things he was wanted to say; he showed the same courage in resisting hysteria in his own party that he had shown in resisting the universal hysteria of the war. He was neither swept from his intellectual moorings nor deprived of his power of perspective. He was accused often enough between 1911 and 1914 of being an opportunist. In the sense that he recognized opportunities for what they were, took the second best when the best was unattainable, did not clamour for the moon when it hung in the sky but bent his will to achieving the immediate and the possible, he was and is an opportunist. Never, however, under any illusion as to what he was doing. He accepted the conditions. He did not think that the second best was the best, only that it was the best available. Opportunism of this sort is realism, and without such opportunism there can be no progress in practical fighting. Lenin himself has always been an opportunist in this sense. But there is another sort of opportunism: that of the man who exploits opportunity for his own advancement; whose action is altogether determined by events and knows no other standard. An opportunist of this type might have tried to ride the whirlwind in 1918-21: have seized the chance of making himself a hero by shouting louder the thing his own

crowd were shouting. There were plenty of people who did this, more who let themselves be swept away by Bolshevik phraseology, sometimes quite sincerely but without much reflection. They were like straws on the current. MacDonald from the first set himself to stem it, because he saw it not as part of the main stream of Socialist thought but as a temporary casual overflow, a bye-product of the war.

A Revolution, whether in Russia or elsewhere, was not a new planet, swimming into his sky and upsetting his cartography. Long before 1917 he had thought about Marxism and the Class War thoroughly and profoundly.

"The economic structure of society is simplified out of all recognition when it is described as the contest between two economic classes, and the political problems of democracy are still more distorted under the guise of simplification when they are stated as being nothing more than an effort to give political form to this economic antagonism. . . . Class, in the sense in which the Marxians use it, is an economic abstraction, an academic generalization. . . . The 'class war' idea belongs to the pre-Socialist and pre-scientific phase of the Labour Movement."[1]

There was nothing in the Russian experiment to shake his well-grounded views as to the course of Socialist evolution in a highly developed country like Great Britain. Again and again, in 1919, when the controversy was at its height, he saw and said that their Revolution, in method, tactic, and form, was essentially a product of Russian conditions—a view such an instructed study as that by Mr. Michael Farbman,

[1] "Socialism and Society," p. 126 *seq.* (1907).

"Bolshevism in Retreat," published in 1923, confirms at every point. As early as 1919, too, he foretold the modifications, the abandonment of the absolute programme, the reversion from Communism, which was actually announced by Lenin in 1921.[1] His criticism was constructive, not merely negative; above all it was radically connected with a positive and definite view of Socialist evolution.

"Just as the Independent Labour Party made its great contribution in 1914 to the politics of war so should it now make as distinctive a contribution to the politics of revolution, and the first sentence of that contribution must be a declaration that whilst a revolutionary 'dictatorship' is needed to guide a revolution into democracy, the only policy which will do that safely and swiftly is one of political freedom, of moral courage, of vigilant reason. When the policeman and the soldier are called in to the Downing Street Smolnys of the world, they accept the invitation not to help them, but to dominate them. But if the soldier is not to be used, the preparation before the revolution must be one of political propaganda, which creates the new society in the bosom of the old as the butterfly grows in the chrysalis. Unless society is prepared to adopt the new order before the revolution, there is no guarantee that it will do so after it.

"The argument 'we must make a revolution in order to transform capitalism into Socialism,' is false. If the governing and possessing authorities make a revolution by making progressive ideas explosive, as the Tsar and his police did in Russia, the architects of a new world must not shirk the responsibilities which that will bring to them and must not refrain from propagating their ideas because foolish people created revolutions in trying to suppress them; and, should a revolution come, the party which is to be most successful in establishing a Socialist Commonwealth by it is that which is to depend upon freedom rather than force, and which is to array around it the towers of the intelligent

[1] "The Moscow Government will modify its position. It will abandon its absolute programme . . . and commence the work of evolutionary revolution," etc. "Parliament and Revolution," p. 17.

democracy rather than trust to the authority of a select and over-awing authority. In other words, to plan a revolution in order to impose a new system upon society is folly or worse; to face a revolution in order to bring a new order to birth is another matter. Even then the revolutionary dictatorship would have to be much more limited than it is in Russia. A dictatorship to maintain the revolution in its critical eruptive stages may be tolerated; but a dictatorship through the period of reconstruction, a dictatorship from which is to issue the decree upon which the reconstruction of society is to be based, is absolutely intolerable. No Socialist worth anything would submit to such a thing. It can be maintained only in such diffused communities as Russia, it can be admired only by Socialists at a distance."[1]

Inside and outside the I.L.P. he fought the Communists with the weapons of logic, history, and Socialism; defended democracy and parliamentary action. The circumstances of the 1918 General Election, the coupon system and the degradation of Parliament helped the Communists nearly as much as Russia did. In the early part of 1919 the Scottish Division of the I.L.P. voted in favour of affiliation with the Third (Moscow) International, and at the Party's annual conference at Glasgow in that year the proposal at one stage looked like being carried, and in the end, though defeated, secured a considerable minority of votes while the disaffiliation of the party from the Second International was accomplished largely on the ground of the "unsympathetic attitude to Russia shown at the Berne conference earlier in the year." The campaign to convert the I.L.P. to Communism went on with redoubled force. Moscow, by way

[1] "Parliament and Revolution," p. 31 *seq.*

of assisting, placed MacDonald on the Index and informed the I.L.P. that if it wished to affiliate it must cast him overboard. If the tactics which succeeded in smashing the French, German, and Italian Socialist Parties failed in Great Britain, it was mainly due to his exertions. His journalist and other writing of this period shows the glee of the born fighter, whom forthright attack exhilarates. He took a mischievous delight in the perplexity caused by the fact that he remained secretary of the Second International while the I.L.P. solemnly left it and joined the half-way house Vienna Union; and when asked to explain carried the attack into the enemy's quarters. At the same time he carried on the whole fight consistently from a Socialist standpoint and was the most vigorous critic of the Government's interventionist and blockade policy, the most effective advocate of peace with Russia. His criticism was of the attempt to apply the Russian tactic in England, to propose it as a model to this more advanced land. Constructive criticism, it educated his party. The results appeared at Easter, 1920, when the annual I.L.P. Conference rejected Communism definitely and the small Communist section seceded. They failed even more decisively at the Labour Party Conference later in the same year. After that Communism degenerated into a nuisance at meetings. Communist efforts in opposition to MacDonald at the Woolwich bye-election in 1921

caused deep indignation throughout the Labour movement, since such effect as they had was to reinforce the Bottomley party. To mention Woolwich was sufficient with a Labour audience during the next two years. Appeals for a "united front," for admission to the Labour Party, in execution of Moscow's instructions to penetrate and break up, have invariably been rejected with contempt, though the word "unity" can always rally a certain sentimental support.

Communism was not merely a domestic battle. It was, from 1918 on, the great issue in International Socialist politics and the great cause of the desperate weakness of the National Socialist parties on the Continent. Efforts to reconstruct the International shivered on it so long as attempts were still being made by well-intentioned persons to secure a compromise understanding with Moscow. Gradually the different Socialist parties came to see, after heartrending experiences of division and distraction in France and Germany, what MacDonald saw from the first—that no accommodation was possible. Between Communism and Socialism there is a difference of principle: between the method of violence and the method of persuasion. The final effort was made in Berlin in April, 1922, when the Executives of the Second, the Third, and the Vienna Union met to endeavour to secure not a common organization but common action for a

specific purpose—the state of Europe on the eve of the Genoa conference. MacDonald was the chief British delegate. Russia was represented by its ablest propagandists, Bucharin and Radek. The great moment of the conference was the duel between MacDonald and Radek. If you want to get political drama, the clash of personalities, the conflicts of minds and, even more vividly, of characters, illustrated with all the vividness of a great Greek play, read the report of this debate.

In Radek MacDonald had an opponent intellectually if not morally worthy of his steel. To read their speeches is to feel, directly, the difference between MacDonald who, as Radek admitted, "speaks with absolute honesty and conviction, as a Socialist," and Radek, playing with devastating skill for position. Radek is probably one of the cleverest men in Europe, but put mere cleverness against an intellect like MacDonald's, and it shivers like fine glass.

After pointing out that from the first the Second had made it clear that co-operation with the Third depended on the clearing up of certain points—Communist "penetration," Georgia, Social-Revolutionary trials, MacDonald asked—"Are you in favour of a united front for its own sake and not for your own sakes?" . . . The full justification for this question was given by the Manifesto issued by the Third in the preceding December, instructing Communist sections all over Europe to take part in the creation of the

united front, not for the purpose of making it effective, but for the purpose of strengthening the Communists through direct propaganda inside the organizations taking part in the movement. Therefore, MacDonald asked :

" If we start our action, what sort of action will it be if we feel that every Communist while carrying it out has a dagger concealed behind his back which he is going to put into us if we give him an opportunity? You must see that until you have given us an explanation of that manifesto it is absurd to talk about a united front or common resolutions to issue in common action."

After dealing with Georgia, he turned to the question of the Social Revolutionary prisoners, for whom a fair trial was demanded.

" You say the Government in power in Germany was responsible for Rosa Luxembourg's murder. Why do you go and copy the same thing yourselves? You know perfectly well it is not going to strengthen you, to give you an ounce of respect outside, to lay one single stone in the foundation of the Government you have striven so hard to build up. If you would just for a moment do a generous thing, it will come back a thousandfold in renewed strength and interest to you. Why do you not do it? Our position is clear, and, again, I am sure that Radek and his friends must respect us for taking it up. These men are our colleagues. Their representatives are here. You object both to them and to us. We disagree. You may be right. We may be right. At any rate until the issue is settled we both hold our opinion. But can you imagine us saying that this is all going to be put in the background, that we are going to sit and talk about an action, the genuineness of which we are not quite sure about, whilst you hold the lives of our comrades in your hands because they are our comrades? Your strategy is too refined. Your tactics are too clever. I quite agree with Radek that what he calls absolute confidence is impossible. I do not want it. The problem is, have we enough in common to enable us to move in the same plane? We cannot agree. Are our disagreements so fundamental that points of agreement become too narrow for common action? Yes, so long as the fundamental conditions are unfulfilled. It is no use talking

about tactics. We must get down to the principles of great ideas—justice, self-respect, harmony and co-operation. When we have settled these then we can come to business."

He then proceeded to read the three conditions upon whose acceptance by the Third the principle of a general conference with a limited agenda could be accepted, and concluded by saying :

" In my opinion if those conditions are accepted, or if some sort of agreement is come to upon them, this conference can be held before the summer is ended. I express here my own personal view. I believe we can agree upon an agenda. The Vienna Union has given us one, and the Second International has officially stated that it accepts it, that we could agree upon resolutions dealing with the findings of Genoa, give the parliamentary parties, the political parties, and the industrial parties a common objective to co-operative action; but I cannot unite in action whilst the Executive of the Third International has made it perfectly clear in a written declaration that it is going to use smooth words, to bring us closer to it so that its knocks upon us may be all the more deadly. I am not going to enter into tactics and use the poverty and starvation of Europe as a ground for manœuvring. I decline it. Tactics at the present time, manœuvring for position, is most detestable. No man in this conference ought to use his influence in support of this corruptive tactics in view of the present position. All I ask you is : Are we joining in this united action or are we not? Are we going to have 'working' confidence in one another? Are we going to put an end to the things which make it impossible for us to co-operate with one another? If not, let us go our separate ways. You have your work to do, we have ours. You must go on, we must go on. I can assure you that we are going to act alone or in conjunction. We have acted, we are going to continue to act. We are going to strengthen our action so that it may be more effective inside and outside Parliament. Time and events will strengthen those who are doing the most loyal service to the world."

Radek opened his reply by saying : " Ramsay MacDonald's speech tempts me to discuss it in detail. First, because it is possible to come to

an understanding with Ramsay MacDonald without creating any ill-feeling; MacDonald's absolute honesty and conviction open the way for peaceful discussions."

In the end he gave the pledges demanded. The way seemed clear. But in the event the Third International dishonoured the pledges and the Berlin effort failed. Its failure demonstrated finally the impossibility of an understanding with Moscow. MacDonald turned to the more limited task of bringing about fusion between the Second and the Vienna Union in a new International. The fruit of the London conference of May, 1922, was the Hamburg meeting of 1923 which created a new representative International. The most striking feature of the Hamburg meeting was the ascendancy of the British section. This ascendancy is mainly his work. "Time and events will strengthen those who are doing the most loyal service to the world."

Easy now that a new International has been created, now that, in Great Britain, the Communists are a discredited and ineffective fraction, denied affiliation to the Labour Party, to say that there never was any real danger. That is not a view that can be taken by anyone who has followed closely the internal currents of the last four years. But for MacDonald's firm grip on fundamentals, his unwavering loyalty to principle, the controversy might easily have developed to produce here, as in France,

Germany, and Italy, a deadly split in the ranks of Labour. After the French and Italian experience, it is impossible to say that Communist propaganda appeals only to the psychology of a defeated country, although it is in the psychology of a defeated people or a defeated class that it finds its most congenial soil. The present solid unity of the party is very largely the result of his work in these years.

ACHIEVEMENT

" At all turns, a man who would do faithfully needs to believe firmly."

Carlyle.

THE present Leader of the Opposition will rank with the ablest and most effective the House of Commons has known. Since Gladstone, there has been no one who has combined his mastery over the instrument, in all its uses, with the power of moral appeal, of lighting a flame in the hearts of his followers and putting the fear of God into his opponents. On the evidence of a parliamentary year, so much can be asserted without fear of question. He has established an admitted personal ascendancy. He is admired, respected, even liked, by all parties. The enthusiasm of his own has grown steadily and surely, as men have learned, through working with him, to appreciate the force and flexibility of his parliamentary tactic, and the range of his personal gifts.

He has welded his battalion into an effective force, an Opposition that has to be reckoned with, that is never caught napping, that knows the rules and how to take advantage of them. The defeat of Mr. Bonar Law's Government on the

Lytton entrants was no accident; it was the fruit of first-rate staff work. The Irish Deportations case showed the power, essential to higher generalship, of seizing the essential point in an issue at once, and striking home upon it, with perfect and justified reliance in his own judgment, against that of the legal experts. In the Socialism debate, in the Mines question, on Foreign Policy, on Disarmament, a clear and challenging policy, the policy of a party ready to assume the responsibilities of government, and equipped with the ability to support them, has been enunciated. No chances have been lost for efficient team work. Opportunities have been given to display the special qualities, use the special gifts, of individuals. The result is that the party stands, in the public esteem, in an altogether different position from that in which it stood at the opening of the Session.

In November, 1922, the average man's feelings about the Labour Party might have been expressed by a huge question mark. To-day, they are different. To-day, that same average man is looking to it with increasing respect, interest, and hope. It has entered on an entirely new phase—the phase of serious examination. In this change Ramsay MacDonald's personal share has been and is immense. Even so, his ascendancy, both in his own party and in the House, is insufficiently appreciated outside it. The reason is simple enough, though these simple

facts are often overlooked. The number of persons who can attend debates is very small. The number which reads Hansard is not large. It is by the press that opinion is formed. It is no part of the business of the press to write up the Opposition. The press, though sectionally divided, stands en masse behind the older parties. In London the Government has the *Times, Telegraph, Morning Post, Express,* and—subject to temporary stunts—the *Mail,* as well as evening papers like the *Standard,* the *Evening News,* and the *Pall Mall,* and, on the whole, the *Observer* on Sunday. Mr. Lloyd George has the *Daily Chronicle*; intermittently, the *Manchester Guardian,* and, more or less faithfully, the *Sunday Times.* The Free Liberals have the *Daily News,* the *Westminster Gazette,* and the *Star.* These organs, in each case, give space, prominence, all that display can do, to the utterances and actions of their own side. Pursuing a tactic that is intelligible and, party fighting allowed for, fair enough, they pay little attention to Labour except on the occasions when individuals in the party make "scenes." Scenes, from their point of view, are a sign of weakness in the party; also, they are spicy news items. Therefore, they are written up and have, in the press, occupied a space out of all proportion to their intrinsic importance. They have served to "blanket" much more serious work. In general, the *Times* has been most adequate in

its general treatment of Labour; the Free Liberal papers the least adequate. The reason is obvious. Free Liberal stock is going down, as Labour's rises. In the effort to redress this impression, the Liberal press is not too scrupulous. An instance will show what occurs. When Mr. Bonar Law resigned, the Leader of the Opposition took the initiative in the House in expressing the regret and personal sympathy felt by all parties. The grace and felicity of his speech was recognized, for instance, by the *Times* and by *Punch*. The *Westminster Gazette*, next morning, omitted all mention of MacDonald, quoting Mr. Asquith, who followed him, as though he had opened the ball. This instance is trifling, but representative of what constantly occurs, not only in the London press, but throughout the country. The *Daily Herald* alone reports Labour adequately, and the very solitariness and official character of the *Herald* mean that it cannot give that discriminating and critical support that is really useful to opinion. The vast mass of provincial readers have to depend on Tory and Liberal sheets, and Tory and Liberal sheets have party axes to grind.

Through this cloud, however, Ramsay MacDonald has emerged as the most significant figure in contemporary politics. In debate, in defence, in attack, he is the equal of any man in the House, and the superior of most. He has a variety of weapons, all of which he uses as

occasion requires, such as no one else now possesses. More and more surely he has driven home the superiority, in sustained and serious work, of a man in whom brains are the servant of character, whose intellectual power is harnessed to moral conviction. There was an accent of moral authority both in his speech on Disarmament and in winding up the Socialist debate such as no other speaker in the House can command. Nor, in either case, could his idealism be dismissed as unreal. The reasoning power behind it is too definite and too clear. "Practicability," as he reminded the Government, "is only impracticability come to ripeness." His moral idealism has, always, this ripeness. It is not the casual expression of passing emotion, but a conviction purged in the furnace of experience and pain. His power over his own party, the enthusiasm which his leadership excites, are rooted in a recognition of this quality, as surely as in the knowledge of his mental power. It is because of this that he has, throughout its ranks, both inside the House and outside, a measure of respect, admiration, and affection such as no leader of Labour has previously called forth. "He is in a class apart," said a member of his party not generally accused of any lack of critical faculty. "He towers head and shoulders above the rest." The subservient loyalty enjoyed by chiefs in other parties is not there, and is not desired; but the

easy familiarity, the entire absence of anything like deference, that mark his relations with his followers—he is "Mac" to them all—means only that admiration is sweetened by something warmer. Of course there is criticism, but the very freedom of its expression, as well as the limitation of its area, testify to the strength of his position, the success of his leadership. It will be interesting, in a moment, to inspect this criticism, for it has light to throw both on the psychology of the party and on his own; but in a truthful picture it is subsidiary.

A leader must be judged by what he does, or rather by what he can make his party do, but that judgment is relative to what he is trying to do. For instance, in the attempt to understand and appreciate Ramsay MacDonald, one is again and again compelled to think of Gladstone. Different as the men are, they have a common quality that sets them apart, gives to both a singular kind of glow. Nowadays, most people, even those who dissent most vehemently from his point of view, admit that Gladstone was a great man. Yet Sir Stanley Leathes the other day[1] said of him that there was "no great thing he did or wanted to do." Nor, though Home Rule may stand on the right side of the balance, is it easy to disprove the assertion. Gladstone's was not really a constructive mind. No such

[1] "The People on its Trial," by Stanley Leathes, Heinemann, 1923.

charge can lie against MacDonald. His final achievement cannot yet be estimated, but there is a great thing he wants to do. The transformation of the social structure, the emancipation of the workers, the definite and planned substitution of co-operation for competition as the principle, and service for profit as the motive, in social organization, national as well as international, is, whether or no it be feasible, a great design. He has pursued it, without relaxation or impatience, throughout his active life, with the tenacity that only whole-hearted conviction can give. He is pursuing it in the House of Commons now.

It is this long vision, securely held, that differentiates him sharply from the men of expedients with whom he is confronted. Because they are men of expedients rather than of ideas, he seldom brings up against them the big guns that he aligned in his controversy with Moscow. A gun is not the appropriate weapon against a feather bed. Quite another tactic is required. Quite another tactic is employed. But, because he is not, on any and every occasion, stating his ultimate and positive ideas : does not, on every issue, regardless of its significance, direct his party into an impossibilist position : the inference is not therefore to be drawn that he would hesitate if an opportunity of constructive action came. No such inference will be drawn by anyone who reviews the actual work of the Labour

Party under his leadership. He has behind him a body, at its maximum strength, of 144. On the motion condemning the Capitalist system he led 121 into the Aye lobby, against 368. Since there was only one Labour member absent unpaired, his effective strength may be taken at a quarter of the total membership of the House. There are strait limits set to what can be done by a general who is outnumbered by three to one, even if, man for man, his effectives are of superior calibre. They can demonstrate, upon occasion, but perpetual demonstration would expose weakness rather than strength. He has chosen to do so upon certain vital issues—Socialism itself, Disarmament, Foreign Policy, Unemployment. Because the ground has been well chosen, the opportunities selected with judgment, and the manœuvre conducted with skill, the demonstration has been thoroughly efficient. On other issues, close and detailed work has been put in, and, in every case, the best possible made of a bad job. Empty protests have been avoided, useful amendments secured. The result is that general opinion recognizes in Labour a working party. At the same time, its individual members are rapidly developing in competence, thanks to the opportunities with which skilled leadership provides them. That skill is shown, above all, in ensuring that pressure is applied at the points where it will have the maximum effect.

The true test of the work of a leader is what

he gets out of his followers, what he enables them to give, the spirit that he infuses into them. If the Opposition dominates the House, as some of its keenest opponents inside would admit that the present Opposition does, that fact shows, more clearly than could anything else, the quality and force of its leadership. Only leadership can enable a party to do that, even a party numerically much stronger than is the Labour Party. The internal test shows the same mastery. MacDonald's election was followed, immediately, by a complete reversal of the cast-iron and mechanical discipline that had been imposed, with fatal results, between 1918 and 1922, as an artificial substitute for driving power. That driving power being present in abundance, with a leader with ideas, vision, and the power of inspiring men, a far freer and more elastic system was substituted—the minimum of regulation, the maximum of individual freedom. It is because he guides with a loose rein, and a sure sense of direction, depends more on intelligent co-operation than on orders and obedience, that there was general resentment of the apparent flouting of his authority at the time of the suspension of the four Glasgow members in June. That incident, magnified out of all proportion by the press, consolidated a hold previously taken perhaps rather too much for granted by the loyal and devoted rank and file. It brought up to the conscious surface of minds

a recognition, before only latent, of how much the party as a whole and every member of it owes to its leader. As, week by week, the general design of his strategy is understood, that recognition has become clearer and more enthusiastic.

Two main qualities distinguish his parliamentary tactic. It is realistic, and it is constructive. He is using his instrument with a clear conception both of the purpose it is to serve and the circumstances within which it has to operate. The most important of these circumstances is that Labour is in a minority. It is a small minority in the House, a larger minority, but still a minority, in the country. Bye-elections show the movement of opinion outside, reflective of the success of the parliamentary party within the House; but there is still a long way to traverse before the minority has become a majority. Moreover, the only majority that is to be of any avail is a converted majority, not a merely acquiescent one; a majority ready to support fundamental change, not merely a majority that is ready to try a change of Government. To create such a conscious and intelligent majority is a slow and laborious process. MacDonald knows that; he faces that; he settles down resolutely to the hard task of laying stone on stone. If he ever feels that

> " Into this wall that will not grow,
> I build myself alive,"

he represses any inclination to complain of " the

slow aim of wise-hearted time." He is prepared to be built in, if only the wall will grow. No good that is worth thinking about or working for was ever come by easily.

He is a builder, not a breaker. If there is a passage in the Scriptures in which he does not believe it is, one may guess, that which describes how the walls of Jericho fell down at the blowing of the trumpet. Beyond their falling, even if they fell, his mind would see the slow task of building anew. No simile is more persistent in his writing than that which likens human struggle to a slow uphill journey. The hills are ahead, but between their tops and the traveller lies a long, difficult stretch of climbing. As a walker I am told he has a passion for short cuts, especially when they are difficult, but as a walker he knows that they generally take longer in the end. Politically he has no time for them, distrusts them. "The man who saves time by galloping loses it by missing his way; the shepherd who hurries his flock to get them home quick, spends the night on the mountain looking for the lost; economy does not consist in haste, but in certainty."[1]

Not to raise the loudest applause, to excite the headiest transport of enthusiasm, will he suggest that here is a heroic adventure, that next week, or the week after, will be crowned by success, and the entry of the workers into the Promised Land. He never has accepted the "next week or

the week after " view of Socialism, or of anything else worth having. His intellectual honesty prevents his using phrases that imply it. He will not give a " clear lead " into the inane. That the " clear lead," no matter into what, is just what some of the more ardent and less disciplined of his followers would like, is, for him, no reason for giving it. For them the day is sufficient. Not for him. For him, it is only one of a long series. He has both the imagination to envisage, and the candour to confront, things as they look to the other side, as well as to his own. There are men behind him who have none of this tolerant truthfulness, who only want assertion and denunciation; but he refuses to adjust his attitude to please them.

The path to Socialism, as he has, from the first, seen and stated it, is persuasion, the instrument consent. He agrees with Jaurès, who said : " No trick, no machinery of surprise, can free Socialism from the necessity of winning over the majority of the nation by propaganda and legal methods." The mind and will of the people set the rate at which it is possible to move towards it. Rightly or wrongly, he does not think that people will be persuaded by fear. Nor is he willing to attract them by extravagant and illusory hopes. The first task of the party, as he seems to conceive it, is not merely to demonstrate its rebellion against Capitalism, or its sympathy with its victims, but to convince a

majority of the electorate that it has a better plan of organization than its opponents, that it is competent to form a Government, and then to proceed to do something actual for those victims. He speaks mainly to the converted. To calm the apprehensions of the many, he is prepared to risk chilling the hopes of the few. Them he expects to understand what he is doing. If they do not, so much the worse for them. He is not going to waste time in explaining, again and again, what ought to be obvious.

In this business of persuasion he relies, mainly, upon reason. There he puts a real strain on some of his own people. Ours is not conspicuously an age of reason. Rather is it an age of instinct. From the first, he attacked the new psychology, as expressed by Bergson and Sorel, with its illicit advocacy of violence. He claimed, justly, that their analysis was narrow and superficial; that, even in their worship of instinct, they left the social instinct out; that intelligence, operating upon and directing instinct, is the lever of progress. His convictions, here as elsewhere, are continuous, not circumstantial. Disbelieving in violence, he is not prepared to accept it, upon occasion, as are so many. In all this, he can certainly claim that, if his critics do not know his mind, the fault is in their inattention. He has always been rational; only, perhaps, not quite rational enough to allow for the irrationality of others, for the

aid for the imposition of those duties. Now, having taken advantage of the time between Committee and Report to ascertain why he has always opposed the Land Valuation Department, he says, 'We have discovered all those wonderful and important things, and therefore I am going to vote in favour of Clause 27.'"

In the same vein was the mock defence at the Labour Party conference of the parliamentary decorum of Mr. Walton Newbold and his description of his contribution to the debates as being "a unique method of bowing to the Chair"—a defence which annihilated those who were trying to suggest that the Member for Motherwell stands on the left.

The success of his own speeches is the more remarkable when the burden of work and responsibility on a Labour Party leader are remembered. He has practically no staff, and as much departmental work as most Ministers. The parliamentary party machine takes much time and more skill and patience. He is Chairman of fortnightly meetings, as of the weekly meetings of the Executive which determine policy and draft resolutions. His responsibility is immense, his authority limited both in theory and in fact. He rules only by the will of a majority, and a majority to which the idea of obedience is deeply unsympathetic.

His extra parliamentary work is as heavy. He is Treasurer of the Labour Party and in June became its Chairman, and the full Executive meets once a month. He is an executive member of the International and of the I.L.P. On top

of this heavy burden of committee work come incessant demands for him as a speaker. Every Labour or Independent Labour Party in the country always asks first for him for its meetings. This was so before the election : is naturally even more marked now. Further, organized labour not only in this country but throughout the world looks to British labour to help it in any and every difficulty : deputations from miners, agricultural labourers, Turks, Georgians, Indians are for ever on his doorstep at Westminster. The work of the ordinary M.P. who takes his duties seriously is heavy enough : that of a leader is crushing to a degree that would be damaging to personal efficiency with a man of anything less than his energy and vitality. The sense of responsibility for a party on its trial before the electorate is hardly less wearing than that of responsibility for government; and the compensations are infinitely less.

The most important of these compensations—i.e., the working effectiveness of his party—he possesses; as, also, the enthusiastic confidence and affectionate support of his own men. But his task, as was frankly admitted, for instance by the *Times,* which recognized his "great gifts of leadership," is a very difficult one. These difficulties are worth investigating, even exaggerating, since they have considerable light to throw both on the psychology of a section of the party, and on his own.

Such investigation should be prefaced by a general admission, true of all groups, and especially relevant to political associations, that there is always a large number of adherents whose cleverness is shown mainly in criticism. The brighter the sun, the more intelligently do they display the spots upon it. So they assert their own individuality. Moreover, in the popular mind there lingers a conception of leadership which is purely romantic. It is romantic, and thoroughly undemocratic. But democracy is a theory whose implications are constantly forgotten by professed democrats; the legend of inspired leadership persists. Neither contemporary facts nor the biographies of men, part at least of whose career is open to contemporary observation, seem to avail to dispel the notion of a perpetually aureoled individual, loved and obeyed with happy enthusiasm by all with whom he works, inspiring, guiding, concentrating in himself the struggle and aspiration of his party.

In our time there have been no such leaders. MacDonald is not one. It is doubtful whether one such ever existed, except retrospectively. Distance in time or space is required to create the illusion out of which the picture emerges. Lenin as seen from London seems to approximate to the ideal, but in Moscow rather different views prevail; and Lenin is outside the democratic limitations. Certainly neither Canning nor Sir Robert Peel, Disraeli nor Gladstone fulfilled the rôle.

Always they had critics who saw the feet of clay and little else. Gladstone looks a moral giant to-day, but Lord Morley, Sir Algernon West, and Mr. Gardiner in his "Life of Harcourt" have, from different angles, shown us how far his colleagues were from seeing him in this heroic light, how unwilling they were to sink their own individualities in service to his more powerful will. The only leader in recent British political history who has actually enjoyed the ascendancy which all doubtless regarded as their due is Parnell, and Parnell, fighting a desperate national battle on a single issue, was in a quite peculiar position. He had power without responsibility. That is not Ramsay MacDonald's case. He has a very limited power and a very heavy responsibility. Of both he is fully aware; more aware than some of his critics. He has had throughout his active career to meet perpetual criticism, opposition, distrust from his own comrades and colleagues. In this his position, in a democracy, is typical not peculiar. To say that much of the criticism is just, is to say that he is human: to ask his critics to remember that, inhuman. In spite of a general admission that perfection does not occur in human relations, followers ask for a perfect leader, leaders for a perfect following—and grumble when they don't get either.

The follower, of course, has a greater freedom to grumble, and the Labour Party has always

paid for its democracy by the extreme audibility of its complaints against everything and everybody associated with it. To some extent this talkativeness acts as a safety valve, and in nine cases out of ten there proves to be little in the dissatisfaction of which so much is heard beforehand, when the testing time comes. For instance, the cackle in the press about the Clyde suspended M.P.'s and the possible "split" in the party preluded a meeting at which unanimity and good feeling prevailed, ending in a striking demonstration of MacDonald's hold over the party.

At the same time voluble grumbles may, at any moment, and for no very good reason, gather themselves up into a storm. There is a sentimentalism which is not always calculable and far less sheer "Party loyalty" than in either of the older parties. Talk, however casual, sometimes grows into belief: constantly repeated charges impose themselves on the minds of those who hear as well as those who make them.

Leadership mechanically creates an isolation round the leader. Perhaps the most solid and serious criticism that has been levelled at MacDonald is that he does not know how to break this down. He accepts all the obligations of loyalty that sit lightly on his followers, but, whether or no he is aware of the fact, the outsider perceives a sort of gap between him and the rest of his party. If he were removed—what

would be left? Where are the right-hand men who could adequately carry on, who know his ideas and could express them? Where are the lieutenants who enjoy his full confidence and can really interpret his mind?

One would be hard put to it to answer. Napoleon was in a different class from his marshals, but they were there and he had created them. Their future was bound up with his: his cause was theirs. Has MacDonald such marshals? One does not see them. There are men who would like to wear his mantle and would dismiss him to Elba to get it, but that does not prove it would fit them. He stands singularly alone. His front bench is strong in personalities, but take him away and the whole seems less than the sum of its parts. Behind there are the different groups, a very keen general sense of appreciative loyalty and a considerable number of men who would die for him—not many, however, who can do much to share his burdens.

There may be all sorts of reasons, in personnel and so forth, why this is so. But the fact remains, and, whatever the explanation, it represents a weakness. Nor is it new. The history of the Independent Labour Party shows a tendency to secession on the part of its young men of outstanding ability too steady to be referred always to their personal idiosyncrasies. It suggests that in its leadership there was an insufficient power to allow scope for minds of

aspiring, if temporary, divergence from its own dominance. Put in its harshest form "He wants devotees, not lieutenants" would represent what was felt then, and is felt now.

So far as the wish goes, this may be a parody. But the result is there, in MacDonald's curious isolation. And this isolation of itself breeds criticism, accounts for the charges of ambiguity, of ambition, already encountered. No one can answer for him, except himself, and he "keeps himself to himself." It is not that he poses or assumes any airs of superiority. His lectures to his lambs, when such are needed, are never couched in the tone of the schoolmaster, and everyone reports their tone as entirely admirable, their effect as excellent. But the isolation remains, and from it springs criticism.

Sincere criticism is always worth understanding, whether it springs from the heart, or from the head. It is from the heart that most of it derives, in the given case. The heart would fain hurry, whatever reason may have to say about "more haste, less speed." Men in a hurry describe themselves as on the Left, and it is from the Left, therefore, that most of the criticism levelled against MacDonald now comes. In substance, though not always in form, it is the same he had to meet, and revelled in meeting, throughout the Communist controversy. There are many who reject Communism intellectually who nevertheless find themselves in natural sympathy

with much of its feeling. They want to be "doing" something, and do not always spend too much time in considering whether the things that occur to them to do are really going to be useful. They feel that he carries caution in tactic, and quiet in expression, to excess. Behind this there lurks the fear, shared by many who are in no sense Communistically inclined, lest, if Premier, he might fail to take the strong and definite steps which they believe to be necessary. They find some of his speeches unnecessarily conciliatory of the other side; they deprecate his unwillingness to make a clear and definite pronouncement of a Labour Government's Socialist programme. To do so would, they believe, help to create a majority that was not merely Labour, in a negative sense, but Socialist in a positive one. This criticism, in its most serious form, may be summed up in a doubt of his possessing a certain form of political courage.

> "He either fears his fate too much
> Or his deserts too small,
> Who dreads to put it to the touch
> To win or lose it all."

They cannot imagine the circumstances in which he would risk all on one throw. Nor, probably, can he. It cannot be repeated too often that his conception of development is biological, and that this view has coloured and will continue to colour his action. Biological change is a slow and gradual process of transformation: he accepts

that. His oratorical gift may hide, but ought not to hide, the fact that intellectually the dramatic view, according to which human affairs proceed by sharp angular jerks, is thoroughly repulsive to him. He has rejected it once for all. The fact that in him intellect dominates impulse was seen in his face. It is of permanent significance. His Socialism is an expression of scientific tendency. Science knows no hurry. "The eternal years of God are hers." It forbids the taking of risks, excludes the notion of "winning or losing it all." In the narrow field of personal action such risks may be legitimate. He does not see politics in terms of human analogies. The risk is not his to take.

What troubles people, in the last resort, is his consistency. Every democratic Socialist talks about consent. He means what he says. He will do his utmost in his own way to create consent, but he will not gamble on the chances of there being more of it than his judgment presents. He will go so far and so fast as opinion supports—no further. His patience is extraordinary. The facts of his career prove that. If genius is patience he is entitled to claim genius on that score alone. He can and will wait. He will not try to jump stages, or to hurry people on the impulse of their emotions faster than their judgment can follow. This inflexible patience is the ground work of his optimism. He does not need to see results in order to believe that they are

coming. He sees himself as the seedsman, not the harvester. He will not try to gather in a crop while it is still green.

Is the crop more than green? Is there any reasonable probability that he will have behind him, after a General Election, a clear Socialist majority? Unless that is so the demands for a definitely Socialist programme are beside the point. Temperament may account for a good deal of his caution. A more important factor is his own clearly formulated philosophy. It has been modified in detail—on such a point, for instance, as workers control—but in its main lines his conception of Socialism, both as to object and as to method, has not changed. No one, on its basis, has any right to expect from a man who believes in the gradual working out of tendencies, a definite and challenging programme of immediate forthright cataclysmic change.

In its broad lines this defence may stand. The trouble of course is that it is the expression of a philosophy, and few Socialists are, in any sense, philosophic. Indignation stirs them—and to the indignant man philosophy seems treachery. To tell the workers that they have got to wait for the working out of a biological process—that is not the sort of thing that inspires them. Yet in theory they would have to agree that a policy of dealing with immediate evils is social reform, not socialism: in theory they would perhaps go further and accept the view MacDonald has

always held that to exploit the psychology of grievances is not the way to make Socialists. His views on this may be quoted both for their own interest and as affording a useful example of the consistency of his point of view. He wrote in 1907 that the greatest danger for Socialists lay in dealing with immediate problems, the evil inheritance of the past.

"It is so easy to agitate for a palliative, to stump for things which do nothing but harm, and to gain a reputation for human sympathy by flitting from agitation to agitation without troubling to think systematically of the future. Wandering aimlessly in the wilderness is a delightful pastime, and leading a crowd from oasis to oasis gives a man, for the time being, the reputation of being a great leader. If the advance to Socialism is to be retarded as this country grows older, it will be because at the beginning the Socialists made themselves responsible for legislation which was merely palliative, which touched the surface only, and which became assimilated by the old order and gave it a new lease of life—for instance, tinkering with the rates of nominal wages, or playing with fanciful democratic toys like the Referendum. It is perfectly certain that everything which is not in some way a carrying out of the principles of Socialism will have to be undone—or those principles are false. The idea that a lax administration of the Poor Law is Socialistic, that putting an unemployed man on a farm for six weeks at the public expense is Socialistic, that feeding school children is the beginning of the Socialist State, is absurd."[1]

Compare this passage, which must be read with the circumstances of the time in mind, with the following from the *Socialist Review* (July, 1923):

"The question is not how conditions are to-day but how they are to be to-morrow. The man who commits himself to the impossible, whether he be a Member of Parliament or the leader of a revolutionary committee, commits himself to failure, and no posing will enable him to avoid his doom.

[1] "Socialism" (Social Problems Series, Jack) p. 119.

"This truth is more important to the evolutionist—nowadays commonly styled the constitutionalist—than to the revolutionist. The Parliamentarian who leads his people to believe that he can do what he cannot, is only creating a public opinion which in the end he cannot appease, which he may keep under control for a time, but which will sooner or later overwhelm him. Therefore, the truly great constitutionalist will put the public in possession of his ideals and his principles of action—in the case of Labour these are comprehended in Socialism, the community organized to secure good life for all—and, at the same time, he will make it clear that a journey has to be undertaken to reach his goal. The pace may be slow or it may be fast, the journey may be a steady progress or an Israelitish wandering hither and thither, long resting in camps, diversions, squabblings, Golden Calves—but it cannot be taken on a broomstick or on a magic carpet. The road has to be trodden. This has always been the method of the Independent Labour Party, though it has had its occasional hours of impatience and its errant erections of Golden Calves. The forty years' journey, theologians argue, was necessary for discipline, for weeding, for the acquiring of habits, and whenever a people are on pilgrimage to a Canaan, if they have not the qualities to enable them to possess it when they get to its borders, they have to wait until they acquire these characteristics."

In theory ninety-nine members out of a hundred in his party would endorse all this. In practice, however, what he calls the Golden Calf is apt to present itself in curiously appealing guise. Few of them have the real unconventionality of mind which enables him to detect temptation when it presents itself under the aspect of personally inexpensive and publicly impressive martyrdom: the desire to do the "strong thing" at the moment without too much thought of the consequences. This objectivity, combined with an unremittingly connected point of view, a refusal to regard incidents in isolation, a continuous sense of responsibility to principle, is, at once, the root of MacDonald's permanent strength

and the explanation of most of the temporary criticism passed upon him. His political maxim has been said to be "Take care of the pounds, and the pence will take care of themselves." He can and does take care of the pounds, but most men can only calculate in coppers. He acts, or refrains from acting, speaks or refrains from speaking, not on a casual impulse, however generous and sincere, but in relation to a body of conviction which does not change its colour or composition with immediate circumstances. A sudden change in the external temperature does not make his blood boil; his feelings, to use a very homely analogy, do not resemble a saucepan of milk which is over the edge on the instant and, as often as not, wastes itself in froth and so is lost. He feels strongly on the large general issues of principle which for most men only assume reality when illustrated in some particular definite instance, but even in relation to them his attitude is undramatic. Neither life as a whole nor the struggle to achieve Socialism can be imagined as presenting itself to his imagination as a tragedy in five acts of which the given moment represents the hour of crisis, the fifth act. Here his psychology is, politically, peculiar, in a sense that is constantly misunderstood. "I play for moments, not eternities"—that is not only the law of the press (and the influence of the press in our time is universal) but the statement of a point of view by which

most people keep themselves going. Grievances inspire, as constructive theories of social organization do not. The difference between the two points of view carries far, and has explosive possibilities in itself. The very statement of the "long period" view provokes those who, temperamentally, take the "short period" one. Indirectly, in this sense, MacDonald, who hates scenes more than anyone, helps to rouse them.

It is true that with any other leader the phenomenon they represent would have taken a much more serious form. With any other leader, there might have been that split that the press is always looking for and failing to find—because it is not there. With him that is excluded. But casual and superficial explosions are another matter. In some form or other they are likely to go on so long as a patient man has impatient followers. The explanation is mainly temperamental. It lies in his temperament as well as in that of those who make scenes.

The scene-makers, of course, have a case, and it is worth understanding. They are driven and haunted by an extremely vivid sense of what poverty means to the poor. For them the capitalist system sums itself up, expresses itself, in that. They are out to smash the system. Their first duty is to make that clear, both to their own constituents and to their opponents. They are in revolt, and every-

one is to know it. The here and now obsesses them. They are more concerned in its evil than in the slowly reached good by which it is to be replaced. The lion in the path is more real to them than the goal he bars. They feel his hot breath incessantly in their nostrils. It excites them; only when they are so excited do they feel that anything is being done. Intellectually they may recognize the slowness of social change: probably they accept the evolutionary view; actually, however, they think in Marxian not biological terms: in terms of smashing not of transforming. Their intellectual basis is anyhow not of primary importance to them; whether or no they are aware of it (as few are) their conceptions are emotional rather than logical. Their characteristic actions arise from a process of dissociation. Thus they would probably reject the idea that an Opposition is, in any sense, co-operating in government. Their attitude is one of protest, of denunciation, of washing hands of responsibility. It is no accident that scenes arise, invariably, on a negative issue, that they frequently destroy a carefully prepared tactical position, that their success would be something like a hold-up of parliamentary business. Protest is an attitude very difficult to maintain in a way that is at once effective and showy. Between effectiveness and showiness, between doing something for yourself and something for your side, the distinction—so vivid to MacDonald

—is perpetually apt to be blurred. On their part, they might urge that he refuses to make the sort of speeches that would allow them to let off steam; that he expresses little or nothing of the indignation that boils within them; that he seldom denounces the system, still more seldom the individuals or even the Government that represents it; that he hardly ever refers to the wrongs or sufferings of the poor, and, if he does, in terms that are anything but picturesque. He can, as the Socialist debate showed, do all this—when he likes, can raise the moral and emotional temperature higher than any other speaker, reach notes outside any other speaker's grasp. But on ordinary day to day issues, large generalizations find little or no place in his parliamentary apparatus. He is addressed to the business in hand, using the instrument for what it is worth, playing the game according to the rules. The very notion of rules exasperates some men. Further, he is not prepared, first on this issue and then on that, to strike the attitude which first this individual and then that demands. He is not, anyhow, fond of attitudes. He has, moreover, to satisfy the whole party. Individuals who are displeased because he does not do just what appeals to them can forget that. They have grievances. A leader must renounce that luxury.

The argument behind scenes is, however, more general and less personal than this. They are

designed to show to all the world, and in particular to the "class conscious" Socialist section, that their representatives "mean business"; that they are prepared to smash the parliamentary code if, for the moment, they cannot smash the system. They are designed to hearten the faithful and frighten the others.

The word "design" is used in no sinister sense, nor is it always accurate. Sometimes scenes are no more than the ebullition of temper, impatient, intolerant, uncontrolled; but in that case they are of no particular interest or significance. There are men in every party, apart from the ambitious who will tolerate no direction but their own, who have never learned and never will learn how to subordinate personal idiosyncrasies to common effort. Constant rebellion against a system, a burning sense of social wrong, a passionate desire to show, here and now, an utter repudiation of injustice, breed a temper ill conducive to patient and orderly co-operation. There are sincere men in the party whose blood boils over at a word; there are impatient idealists and undisciplined individualists who regard thought as treachery and must demonstrate here and now, on their own ground, even at the price of allowing the enemy on to it.

There is here a curious psychology which is worth investigating. It occurs in all advanced parties and is peculiar to them. Though the men to whom it applies are not numerous, it requires

to be understood if the special difficulties of MacDonald's leadership are to be appreciated. This is the habit of minority thought and action, the belief that the fewer people agree with you, the more likely you are to be right; that it is only when every man's hand is against you that you can be quite sure of your ground. Men whose minds move in this way suspect success and find it difficult to recognize it. Theirs is the tactic of desperate rearguard actions. In the last ditch they are magnificent; they will never acknowledge defeat. But by a paradox easily understood if imagination is applied, they cannot get themselves into the mental attitude of victory. The idealist is often a profound pessimist at heart, and the pessimism of personal suffering is deeply stamped upon a section of the Independent Labour Party, in whose ranks most of the men of this unconscious minority habit of mind are to be found. There are in it an exceptional number of men who have had everything and everybody against them throughout years: who have been on the unpopular side and in opposition to the powers that be: who have endured victimization of every kind. It has bred in them a feeling, the more irresistible that it is a feeling and not a thought-out conviction, that when they stand alone and only then they are right: are doing something for the silent and the helpless: are safe—safe above all from backsliding. They are suspicious of everyone, critical of everyone.

This suspicion is part of the hard price they have to pay for their own emergence. As workmen they have been "done in," they expect to be "done in" again unless they are incessantly on the look-out to prevent it. They suspect the other side, even more readily do they suspect their own. Vaguely, theoretically, they trust the workers—in the mass: as individuals or as particular groups they suspect them as readily as they do the intellectuals, against whom is set the black mark of difference. The recriminations of Black Friday were unusually loud, but in no other sense exceptional. This distrust is continually expressing itself: no record is safe against it. It explains the heresy hunting on the one hand and cell or cave formations on the other, which are endemic in working-class politics. At any given moment there is some mystic password or badge which connotes one of those who are "sound"—but at no given moment are there many of them. Broadly, however, a man may steal a horse in a tweed suit and a cloth cap, but not so much as look over a gate in dress clothes. MacDonald risked much by dining at Buckingham Palace: more by dining there and elsewhere in the ordinary garb of a gentleman: most, and that daily, by the quietness of his language and the fact that it is not adorned by "class conscious" expletives. Hardie's cap held adherents when his actions, and his reserve about them, gave more substantial ground for mistrust

than have MacDonald's. His dourness was a guarantee of genuineness. MacDonald's friendliness, above all his friendly tolerance of individuals on the other side, his power to fight without personalities, give continual food to the suspicious temper.

The difficulty of dealing with this is that it is neither rational nor rationalized. The root from which it springs is not intellectual but emotional. It is a feeling—sometimes, though not always, tragically sincere. It is one, too, which finds incessant food in the compromise inevitable when the diverse personalities that form any party (and the Labour Party is particularly rich in them) have to be welded together into a striking force: in the opportunism, the acceptance of the best available, that is the method of democratic progress. The irreconcilable idealist is always "taking his stand" with unconscious egotism, and a lofty blindness to the shortness of his range of vision. He must proclaim the whole truth here and now: he lives as though to-morrow were the Day of Judgment: too often as if for to-day he were the Judge. The slow drudgery, the patient accommodation required of a member of a party, is rejected with heroic scorn.

This temper makes magnificent speeches: but rather of the "single speech" type. It is the ideal temper for the outdoor propagandist; by no means the ideal temper for parliamentary debate and hard constructive work. It is, in general,

a demonstrating rather than a working temper. It is a temper with which MacDonald has little natural sympathy. He has been through the mill, has ploughed the lonely furrow; but at no time was he visited by the minority illusion. Even during the war his insistence on looking forward, on building for the future instead of uttering jeremiads among the ruins of the present, perturbed many of his more fanatical supporters. They would have liked, then as now, a more "smashing" tactic. They did not get it then, they do not get it now. It may be that they will "never be happy till they get it"—but unless one misreads their leader altogether, that, for him, constitutes no valid reason for giving it to them. If he has, like a wise nurse, made up his mind that sweets are not good for his children, he will not hand any out to keep them quiet when they are naughty, or to make them like him. They must learn to do without. If they say hard things, either behind his back or to his face, he shrugs his shoulders. They should have more sense, above all more sense of humour.

THE SLING AND THE STONE

" What liberty and prosperity depend upon are the souls of men and the spirits—which are the men. The mind is the man."

Oliver Cromwell.

"LANGUAGE was given to man to conceal his thoughts." Is that why so many people who profess great curiosity to know what this or that distinguished person is " really like " will do anything rather than read what he writes? Or is it a feeling that writing is a conscious business and that to know a man you must catch him off his guard, see him at breakfast or when he has broken his bootlace on the point of going out to catch a train? Anyhow, it is a mistake in the case of a man as definitely self-directed as the most cursory review of MacDonald's career shows him to be. Continuity of purpose, continuity of thought—of those things it gives assurance. Years of discipline and preparation, devoted to the making up of his own mind, knowing what was in it; then, after that, the determined application of that mind to an endeavour to mould the frame of things nearer to the heart's desire.

This being so, any attempt to know him which

leaves out his writings and, in lesser degree, his speeches, is absurd. If you will not trouble to understand his mind, to get at the ideas that make him go, you cannot know him. There are plenty of people well in the foreground to-day whose course, even whose intellectual course, is determined from outside; whose philosophy, if they have one—it is uncommon—is no more than a casual interpretation of the moving surface of events; whose actions and words are determined by what is vaguely called "temperament"; who do not know what they think; whose "general ideas" might be reduced to the formula "The world's mine oyster." MacDonald is not one of them. He is an idealist in the sense that ideas dominate and connect his actions. His practical "opportunism" is a secondary not a primary quality, no more than the sense that any effective man must have of how to use opportunity to further ideas.

There are politicians who can be understood without any serious attempt to understand their views, since in the serious sense they have none. But he has not only views but a philosophy. His Socialism is not a body of political doctrine only; it covers the whole of life. To attempt a description of him which leaves out that is futile. If those who try to "explain" his attitude on this or that question would read him they would save themselves and the public much wanton mystification.

"Socialism is more than an organized movement and a creed; it is a spirit and a tendency. It suffuses all things in this age. Its morality is the command of the heart uttered in persuasive firmness that the injustice done to one is the reproach heaped upon all; its economics is the imperative to which commercialism itself must respond; its politics is the path mapped out by destiny for a state which uses communal consciousness as a protector of individual life and liberty."[1]

This is not a definition. It is a description—and one in which stress is laid upon two points that recur again and again in its author's writing: the moral imperative on the one hand and the respect for liberty on the other. One of the recurring charges that he brings against the existing system is its contempt for individuality ("Nothing is rarer in society to-day than individuality"[2]) and its tendency to stamp out its expression. His nationalism is rooted in a respect for individuality: so to a large extent was his opposition to the extreme "functionalism" of a certain phase of Guild Socialist propaganda.[3] At the same time his hatred of everything merely mechanical and opposition to bureaucratic collectivism always made him hospitable to the idea of workers' control, and markedly so in his later writings. "State Capitalism," he wrote long before it began to be established in Russia, "is no more Socialism than is peasant proprietorship, secured by public credit, land nationalization."[4] Individuality is sacred, but "the

[1] "Margaret Ethel MacDonald," p. 128.
[2] "Socialism and Society," p. 7.
[3] Cf. "Parliament and Democracy," p. 23 *seq.*
[4] "The Socialist Movement," p. 157.

acquiring, self-regarding 'I' is an altogether imperfect realization of the human ego."[1] It is as a "humble co-operator in society, seeking peace in service and worth in sharing" that the "I" finds himself. The same spirit gives dignity to national and local patriotism:

"The patriotism which expresses a share in common life felt and valued is of a totally different quality from that which expresses a share in common power. This latter is the patriotism that 'is not enough,' that issues in no fine national spirit, and no sane political judgment. It is a blinding pride, not an enlightening dignity. Therefore, political education should begin by the cultivation of the tradition of the locality, and democratic government should be founded on the self-government of the local community. 'My fathers' graves are there.'"[2]

It is in an intense value for and belief in individuality, the recognition of the sacredness of personality, that his democracy is rooted.

"It has been customary, especially since Maine's time, to consider democracy as nothing but a form of government. That is totally wrong. It is a kind of government. With a social democracy politics really become national for the first time, and community consciousness takes the place of class consciousness."[3]

Dictatorship, like every other caste rule, denies value or choice to all but the few and is, therefore, anathema. Like capitalism, it thwarts the divine thing in man by denying his moral freedom. To call it the dictatorship of the proletariat does not alter the fact.

[1] "Socialism and Society," p. 26.
[2] "Socialism, Critical and Constructive," p. 245.
[3] "The Socialist Movement," p. 19.

"Socialism is no class movement. Socialism is a movement of opinion, not an organization of status. It is not the rule of the working class: it is the organization of the community."[1]

Above all things it is an organization which, while scientific in its development, is governed by the moral imperative.

"History is a progression of social stages which have preceded and succeeded each other like the unfolding of life from the amœba to the mammal, or from the bud to the fruit. To-day we are in the economic stage. Yesterday we were in the political stage. To-morrow we shall be in the moral stage."[2]

"How to make society conform in its functioning to the moral standards of the individual"—this is the "first comprehensive problem which faces an industrial and enfranchised democracy." Communal control of economic forces is necessary to permit that.

"No better definition of Socialism can be given in general terms than that it aims at the organization of the material economic forces of Society and their control by the human forces; no better criticism of Capitalism can be given than that it aims at the organization of the human forces of Society and their control by the economic and material forces."[3]

Never in any dogmatic form, but always implicit, is the homage to moral conviction, the recognition of conscience.

"The convictions of the heart are never stilled. They not only are unsleeping in supplying standards of excellence alien to those in common use by which the work of Society

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[1] "Socialism, Critical and Constructive," p. 124.
[2] "Socialism and Society," p. 41.
[3] "Socialism, Critical and Constructive," p. 43.

is appraised, but also in their demands that social structure shall be determined by the higher requirements and by nothing else. Thus we have an endless conflict between spirit and form, an unrest which can be satisfied by no charity, no concession, no compromise—a challenge ever sounding between labour representing the human spirit and Capitalism representing the economic organization. The pluto which heaves beneath Society and which sends tremors through its apparently solid mass is the spirit to which we do homage as Christianity. . . . There lies the conflict. The end may be far off. It may be separated from these times by turmoil, revolution, madness. But the spirit will not die down, because it is one of the powers of creation."[1]

But this power is neither ignorant nor unconscious. "The Socialist scheme of society is not a dream fabric, spun from a belief in the "good man" or the "divinity of human nature," but the "completion in idea of social patterns whose outlines are already appearing in Society."[2] The driving force behind is intelligence. To that he always comes back, in that he places his trust. Socialism is "an idea which is to be realized by a continuation of experimental change; its instrument is persuasion."[3]

"Socialism can only move men by education and moral idealism; its sound economic criticisms of the classes must be used as logs by which the fires of moral enthusiasm are kept blazing."[4]

Only in this sense is it inevitable, as the continuation of a rational social evolution.

"The industrial and social inevitability of Socialism is a mere fancy. It is inevitable only if intelligence makes it so. *It is inevitable only if we are to develop on rational lines;* it is inevitable not because men are exploited or because the fabric of Capitalism must collapse under its

[1] "Socialism, Critical and Constructive," p. 21.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 281.
[3] "Socialist Movement," p. 129.
[4] "Socialism, Critical and Constructive," p. 278.

own weight, but because men are rational. It is the action of reason alone which makes our evils a sure cause of progress and not the possible beginning of final deterioration. Intelligence and morality indicate the goal by which the struggle to escape the existing purgatory is guided. Human evolution is a stretching out, not a being pushed forward."[1]

It is when "the organization of things invites the co-operation of minds" that Socialism begins to be, and the co-operation of minds is at the same time the instrument by which that organization is to be effected. The immediate need is the social organization of economic power, and the education of the spirit of service.

"Social organization has now to be carried on to a further stage. And what has to be the subject of this organization? It can be but one thing—economic power. The individualist epoch created that power, organized it, and broke down under its load. Like the fisherman in the Eastern tale who liberated the genii, individualism has been unable to control its own discoveries.[2]

"The Socialist seeks to educate into community and co-operative frames of minds, so that people will think of their partners in different fields of service rather than of their subordinates or their employees (whom erroneously, except on purely personal service like that of a valet, they imagine that they employ). Such a change in thought will lead to a revolution in social organization, right from beginning to end—from class relationships to workshop control. It has begun. It may be hampered, it cannot be dammed back. The Socialist State is already appearing within the Capitalist State. Its creative force is an intelligence which can conceive of organized communal service, not as a purposeful exercise of sacrifice and moral strenuousness like the discipline of a religious fellowship, but as an ordinary grouping of human effort for production, for distribution and for culture."[3]

MacDonald is a close and logical writer, to the

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[1] "Socialism and Society," p. 142.
[2] "The Socialist Movement," p. 248.
[3] "Socialism, Critical and Constructive," p. 279.

march of whose logic extract does injustice. His contributions to the literature of his party—works as they are of a man incessantly engaged in active politics, never free of the dust and strain of the conflict—represent the most complete and definite exposition of democratic Socialism made in our time; as such they have been translated and read all over Europe. What must strike the reader most forcibly is the strong continuity of their underlying point of view. There is none of the rigidity of Marxian dogmatism. The earliest colouring given to his views was biological, and from his first controversial work to his latest he is found opposing to the static and catastrophic notions orthodox in the eighties and revived by the Russian revolution, the evolutionary idea and terminology.

"Socialism is a tendency, not a revealed dogma, and therefore it is modified in its form of expression from generation to generation." There is hospitality to new streams of thought. But while the form modifies, is that of a living river, gathering strength from the new currents that feed it, its direction is steady to the sea. Each particular application is governed by a clear grasp of principles.

The intellectual content of his writings is more important, both to him and to his readers, than its form. Yet the form is interesting too. Everything he writes is individual. His style has a marked physiognomy: a queer mixture of

grace and awkwardness, eloquence and reserve. There is music, here and there, but it is intermittent and uncertain. In his expository writing it only breaks through in an odd phrase, an odd image. In the life of his wife, however, both in the privately printed memoir and the published book, as every now and then in his journalism, he reveals a command over the difficult medium of narrative and description of a high order. If he does not write more picturesquely about Socialism it is because he is so desperately anxious to appeal to the intelligence of his readers. The last thing he seems to desire is to carry them away, for the moment. Certainly that is not the effect he is likely to produce. He is a most persuasive speaker: as a writer he, more often than not, insists upon handicapping himself. Or so it seems. Compare the style of "Socialism and Society" (1907) or "Socialism, Critical and Constructive" (1921) with the style of "Margaret Ethel MacDonald" (1912), or of some of his contributions to the *Socialist Review*, *Forward*, *Nation*, or *New Leader*. The difference is startling. Yet "Socialism and Society" and "Socialism, Critical and Constructive," though an interval of a dozen years lies between them, are written with the same pen, and it is not the pen either of the Memoir (1912) or of the introduction to the Life of Keir Hardie (1921). The pen which wrote the last two is an instrument of

much richer and more constant music. The Memoir in particular has not passages merely but a sustained flow of level, just and beautiful prose, simple and liquid as water, perfectly adapted to its purpose. In his journalism he sometimes gets the same sort of effect; can also upon occasion achieve considerable things of a more decorated kind. One has the impression that for controversial writing he uses a not too sympathetic but very efficient fountain pen—one of those stylographs with a hard unyielding point and no more ink than is necessary; whereas every now and then he writes to please himself with an instrument at once softer and freer.

It need perhaps hardly be mentioned, though such things have their interest and little, nowadays, can be taken for granted, that he does his writing with his own hand. Letters of course are dictated: articles never. There are prominent men whose speeches are compiled, their articles, even their books, written for them. He relies on no such dangerous aids. He prepares his own speeches, and writes every line that goes out over his name in a clear, regular writing of a high general legibility, with notably short head and tail letters and no flourishes about it; an individual but undecorated hand.

His style is individual. It can be recognized readily enough by anyone who has studied its characteristic turns: the tendency to end the sentence on a weak word or phrase, the staccato

construction and long sentences of the speaker. It is, however, impersonal, whether he writes with his good pen or his bad. As in his speeches he seems, quite naturally, to avoid the "I" form. He planned at one time the editing of a History of the War, but there has come from him nothing whatever in the nature of a "personal vindication." It is almost impossible to imagine his doing such a thing, and compiling those Reminiscences which would be so interesting but which we shall never read. During the war he published various pamphlets, among them "War and the Workers" (U.D.C., 1914); a book on "National Defence" (Allen Unwin, 1917. The date—before the Russian Revolution—is worth noting), a vigorous and closely reasoned plea for disarmament and attack on the Continental Socialist fallacy of a citizen army: and a little book on "Socialism and the War" dedicated to the Independent Labour Party (January, 1918). In none of them does he strike the personal note, explicitly or implicitly. Nor does he do so in his "Policy for the Labour Party" (Parsons, 1920); the chapter describing the work of the L.R.C., for instance, is actually misleading in its modesty, in its omissions of his own work.

There are many things to be said about this reticent modesty. Here, however, it is to be noted as lowering the colour of his writing. Personality interests the average reader more

than logic. If he has to have logic he likes it presented through the medium of a definite assertion of an individual view. MacDonald is dogmatic enough at times, but the passages in his writing in which the individual suggestion is strongest are not the most dogmatic ones.

In all writing, however skilful, there is conveyed something besides idea. The instrument of expression is personal and the detail as well as the ground plan of character cannot help getting through. Even in insincere writing this is true; its insincerity impresses itself, willy-nilly. MacDonald's writing is obviously sincere: he is trying to convey what he thinks. If he does not invariably succeed the reason is partly this very sincerity. Often he mystifies his readers, as he does his hearers. They come away with a feeling that they do not know where they are. They want to be told what to think: instead they are told how to think. Again and again, the conclusion, the peroration that drives the argument home, seems to be omitted. The difficulties are admirably analysed, the way out cursorily indicated. MacDonald's friends often complain that he is misreported. Yet there is an excuse for the reporters: even in such a case as that of the paper which reproduced his arguments against parliamentary and industrial democracy and stopped there, regardless of the fact that these were the fallacies the speaker was stating in order to destroy. This fondness for

stating an opponent's case is characteristic. He enjoys difficulties, is at his best when they are formidable. Danger attracts him: he likes to go right up to the cannon's mouth. But in so doing he is apt to forget the weaker brethren whose courage is less collected and who count on him for weapons: whose faith is blind and who have small taste for perpetually conquered doubt. Forgetting the weaker brethren, an insufficient sense of the different psychology of other people, is his great weakness. He argues too much. Men want a slogan: he presents them with a syllogism.

This trait suggests two strains in a complex character. Personally he is, without arrogance and with much charm, nevertheless domineering. He wants obedience rather than understanding, loyalty rather than companionship. At the same time this personal instinctive dominance is rejected by his intellect. He demands that every individual should do his own thinking. He is out to stimulate thought, not to suggest conclusions. He won't tell him what to think. That is dictatorship, and, in theory, quite honestly, he rejects that. A "clear lead" is a call for unthinking obedience and for the acceptance of a formula, an invitation to a mental ease and laziness abhorrent to his athletic mind. But, as the result of individual thought, the follower must come out, somehow or other, exactly at the place he has himself reached. He is not going to help

him along the way. But he must be at the tryst on time and must know the route by the light of reason. If he loses the way, strays from the straight path to investigate attractive coppices, pick pretty flowers or negotiate awkward and unnecessary rocks, he has no use for him. Small wonder if the follower is baffled.

In his writing the second trait constantly appears in the refusal to sum up in a creed, a rejection of dogmatism. This attitude is seen at its best in his controversies with Moscow and, at all stages, with those who would treat Marx or any other book as a Bible; at its worst in the vagueness of the latter portions of "Socialism, Critical and Constructive" or "Parliament and Democracy." Plainly, he knows what he thinks, but nothing will induce him to express it in so many words. The same thing sometimes happens at meetings. The destructive analysis is brilliant: the positive statement reserved. Arbitrarily reserved, too. When the speech or the book is carefully gone over, the elements of positive statement are there: it is clear in his own mind: but for some reason or other the reader has got to pick it out for himself. Average laziness will not do this.

In this refusal to do people's thinking for them and present the result as a pellet, to be swallowed after meals, there is another element. It is bad for people to be spoon or pellet fed. That is the "moral" side of the explanation—and morality

of this sort is a constant strain in this natural Calvinist. There is also an intellectual side. "The truth," said Oscar Wilde, "is never pure and seldom simple." There may be moral absolutes—MacDonald certainly recognizes them, as his action in 1914 showed—but intellectual honesty excludes final and simple pronouncements. There are very few such to be found in his writings. His conception of society is scientific; it is not simple. No evolutionist can take simple views. The "simplicity" of revolution is repugnant to him; it would be suspect on that ground, if on no other. Life is an extraordinary and fascinating complex: a view that covers the facts cannot be stated in a phrase.

He has coined unforgettable phrases, but of a special kind. They are seldom summaries, never slogans. They are nearly always images. Read his speeches, or, still better, hear them, and you will be struck by this. His great gift on the platform is his power to make his audience *see*. The idea clothes itself. You *see* the grass waving green over the graves of the dead soldiers of Europe, you *see* the circus troupe of the Coalition, you *see* the gorgeous merchants of Baghdad, as he describes them; the whole thing glows with colour, is instinct with life, is there before you.

There is in this something more than the natural expression of an objective mind. To show a man the truth is legitimate, to impose

your version on him illegitimate. It is a sort of invasion of personality. Seeing, a man may, nay, must think for himself. The inferences drawn from an image have a freedom that do not belong to the command of a statement. A statement tells a man what to think. An image can show him how to think, break a path through the tangle which he can follow up if he will. A refusal to "lay down the law" belongs to his respect for minorities, as the creators of opinion, as for all active, individual minds whose existence helps to break the "mass of unhelpful acquiescing indifference" which is the real obstacle to democracy.

"The minority will always be there and with the minority is life. However substantially a man may build the houses where he shelters his body, his mind, like a Bedouin, will dwell only in tents which it strikes with the morning light."[1]

This desire to leave hearer or reader free to judge is an important element in his work. It expresses itself partly in an extreme economy of personal statement. In his professional work the author's personality is withheld. There is no uncertainty as to what he thinks; the exposition is exceedingly clear; but the personal note is almost entirely absent. For the most part too, what may be called the human, religious side of Socialism is suggested merely. "I am a Socialist because I feel . . ." That note is never sounded. The emphasis is always on the intelligence of the reader. One might almost

[1] "Socialism, Critical and Constructive," pp. 283-4.

imagine the orator, conscious of the arguments that can be used against a medium of persuasion in which the personal element must be important, trying to get right by denuding himself of that. There are pregnant sentences (e.g., "History was written in order that we may pass over the road of progress once and not a hundred times"), and every now and then some delightful personal irrelevancy breaks through, to be severely repressed at once. But on the whole they are as "impersonal" as books can well be, and the general impression one of colourless austerity. That a man, who, however perplexing, admittedly possesses individuality in high degree, should, as a writer, be determinedly and successfully impersonal, is a curious paradox. Does it not suggest, however, its own explanation—the same that has been forced upon us more than once before—in the fact that he is one of the few unself-conscious persons in a highly self-conscious age? Self-consciousness is to some extent an effort after the assertion of individuality. It is often acute in proportion as it is unsuccessful. Where individuality is pronounced, it can operate, on others, and for its possessor, without effort or awareness.

That this is indeed the case with MacDonald is an impression which his unconsidered journalism makes irresistible. To recognize individuality in the conscious expression of ideas, is, for most of us, hard. It is hard to believe that a man's

thoughts are his essential self, very hard to know them for that when they are given as bare a form as MacDonald selects for them in his books.

But in his unconsidered journalism the recognition is easier. Fortunately, as a free lance, he never had to submit to the muffling process that obscures the individuality of the leader-writer. It is in his journalism only that what may be called the "I" note is occasionally sounded. The following passage taken from "A letter to a Communist," written early in 1921, gives more of "the man himself" than can be extracted from rows of books, and supplies a guiding thread through much that is in them :

"I am a Democrat, and therefore I must believe in public opinion and education; I am a Socialist, and therefore I must believe in the steady transformation of society upon a plan of growth rather than by its obedience to orders. I must have some proportion between ways and means, some regard for the nature of the instrument and its work. I do not use a bread knife to sharpen my pencil, nor a boot brush to clean my teeth. I do not beat my children until they become wise or starve them until they become moral—my reason being that bruises and wisdom, hunger and morality, have no relation to each other. In some cases, obedience is good in itself and orders may then be enforced, but to expect a whole society to behave decently on order, and on order to do the right thing in thought and conduct is shown by the history of the Soviet Government (by its abandonment of Sovietism, its treatment of the land, its suppression of workshop control, its concessions to American financiers) to be like believing that every Scotsman, who knows the Shorter Catechism by heart, is immune from all the snares of life. Violent means and a Socialist object do not go together. The passions say 'violence,' the head says 'Socialism,' the emotions say that they co-operate, the reason that they are at war.

"The first duty of the man who wishes to recreate Society is not to get hold of a weapon but to understand what he wants to do. That done, he may then select a bludgeon, a

lancet or a sermon. Owing to inveterate habit acquired from ancestors of doubtful intelligence, we still fly to the bludgeon first of all. Now, what I want to do is to get a totally new relationship between the functions of Society, and a totally new standpoint regarding social values. That is Socialism. I cannot do that, however, by anything of the species of fisticuffs. To me the ' peace ' of the European War is exactly what I expected it would be. ' The-war-to-end-war ' warriors expected a miracle and they did not get it, much to their discomfiture. They were not betrayed by their leaders; they were only foolish from the beginning. They took up their weapons before they had considered the nature of the thing they wanted. I select my weapons according to my work--a pen to write, a fork to eat, a sword to make an idiot of myself, a revolution (as you understand the word) to waste my life and other people's.

" For my social ends I select reason, the success of specific endeavour, the transformation of opinion, the assent of the people. In doing that, I get in the quickest way to the things I am driving at. The blood-stirring Russian Revolution, the extraordinary defence of the Bolshevists against external enemies, the pamphlets and manifestoes proving, as far as moral logic can prove anything, that there had to be violence and repression and that there were no human rights but only State ones, did not solve the most elementary problem in Socialism—workshop control by the workmen. The economic mechanism of society is constructed not out of economic but out of psychological material. We must, therefore, get behind the machine, and that is true whether we have a revolution or not. A revolution eases none of our problems except the superficial and mechanical ones. I attack them last, not first. One of the weakest things in the world is an Act of Parliament which does not embody public opinion; perhaps the only thing weaker is the decree of a dictatorship. I value the Socialist work of Lenin not so much for what he has done, but for what he is experiencing. In ten years the work of the Bolshevist Government freed from outside attacks and commanding the necessities of life, will bring Russia to where (and no further) five years of a Labour Government in this country backed by public opinion would bring us; two years of Bolshevism in this country would bring us to where Russia was a dozen years before the Revolution."[1]

This passage gives one side very clearly—the inspired common sense, shot with humour, which

[1] *The Venturer*, February, 1921.

again and again looks out in his speeches. But there is more than this to be gleaned from his journalism. Until he became Leader of the Opposition, from 1915 or so until the end of 1922, he wrote every week an article in the Scottish weekly, *Forward*. Up to 1918 it was called "From the Green Benches," and was a parliamentary survey. These articles were good, but after 1918, when they were simply a free commentary by their author on whatever happened to be at the top of his mind, they were better; best indeed when he had nothing particular, in the way of a public event, to write about. Unequal, of course, but always fresh, vigorous, and—rarest thing with MacDonald—unbuttoned. A file of *Forward* is the best guide to any future biographer; he will find nearly everything he wants in these articles: all sorts of things he would not expect if he only knew his subject in the decorous atmosphere of Westminster. His sense of decorum, of tradition, is immense. But there is small danger of forgetting it. The danger is all the other way: that it should muffle and conceal the wayward, irresponsible, romantic being that is so oddly doubled with the reasonable, cautious, responsible statesman.

Romantic — yes: that above everything. There is plenty of other evidence of it, but the *Forward* articles are conclusive. Often you will find MacDonald there denouncing Communism as "romantic" or "nursery" politics. That is

because it is romantic about phrases. He is romantic about things. Phrases are not wonderful to him, phrases excite no reverence, he turns them inside out and reveals their emptiness, mercilessly, hates them wherever he finds them. But things are clothed with wonder and reverence. In the midst of an election he has time to notice, to feel their beauty:

"Whether the hour is two-thirty in the afternoon or ten o'clock at night, there is not a building in the constituency nearly big enough to hold the crowds. It would be killing and nerve-destroying work, but for the great peace outside.

"My place goes up for about twelve miles from the sea into the heart of the mountains. A river flows through the length of the valley and the hills press close upon its sides. A railway barely finds room between the river and the hills; a road, cut into the hillside, runs with many a hairpin curve high above; coal-pits are frequent (less than one-third of the electors are miners, however); near its mouth the river in some long gone by time was dammed up into a lake upon the flat floor of which the lowest of the valley villages is built; the others hang on by their eye-brows to the mountain slopes—twenty steps up to their front door, the back door overhung by the cut hillside. Here 8,500 of my 35,000 voters live. They are people of simple honest ways of life and my majority amongst them is sure.

"The moon is full and no excited crowd can enlist the valley itself in the fight. From the road the hills look like huge sentinels, who watch and think but move not. The electric lights, glittering singly at pits or in groups in the villages, suggest some demoniac work going on in the night and in the midst of shadows. Clouds come and go, the car gropes its way over places that are rutty and smooth, crawling past bits which drop away sheer down to the river and where a mistaken swerve would create a vacancy in the ballot paper. Suffusing the whole long view up and down the valley cleft, is the most wonderful silvery light and the sky is resplendent with the magic of the moon. So electioneering here is not without its compensations."[1]

[1] *Forward*, 11th November, 1922.

This sense of beauty has a special tinge when there is added to it the authority of age. Old feelings, old places, have for him a sacredness that new feelings have not got.

"There are places—sometimes great cities like Rome, sometimes only buildings like the Tower of London, or the castles of Edinburgh and Stirling—into which time and event have breathed the breath of life and they have become as living souls. We think of them as brooding over their past and looking upon the generation around them with the detachment of one whose thoughts are fixed elsewhere, or with the pity of one who endures in the midst of a world that is fussing, fuming and passing into a shadow. They are too dignified to speak; they only muse and remember."[1]

This romantic sense belongs to many Scots. It is their secret. They pretend it is nationalism, but it is much deeper and wider than that. Their Socialism and their individualism spring from the same root: a sense of the wonder, of the divinity even, attaching to personality, and to the places which are the symbols, the shrines of personality. It is the historic sense, more vivid often in the dispossessed than in those who are themselves the visible guardians of tradition, the heirs of the ages. The Scot, wherever and in whatever station he is born, knows that Scotland belongs to him because he feels its history in his veins. The people and the place belong together. No visible landlordism can dissociate them. You feel this in Scott, you feel it in Burns, you feel it in Carlyle,

[1] *Nation*, 14th October, 1922.

you feel it whenever a Scotsman speaks from his heart, you feel it in MacDonald—the MacDonald of the *Forward* articles, of the introduction to the Life of Keir Hardie, of the first and last chapters of the Life of his wife. It is a reticent, a hidden feeling. That is partly why it expresses itself more readily about the dead than about the living, about the past than about the present. But not to recognize it is to go completely astray. Its very reticence is a sign of the depths of its roots. It is something profounder than a simple sense of beauty : it is beauty touched with magic.

" After hours that never weary and dawdlings at stations and between stations that never tire, you find you have got to a top, and that, having endured thus far, your way is to be made easier. Down into the plains of Lombardy and night you go with a dash and a shriek and a recklessness. One more barrier desert has to be crossed. You waken in that extraordinary wilderness of tawny swamp and field and broken hillside—pettifogging troublesome hills on one side and the placid Mediterranean on the others—which guards Rome. Then the City comes. You have a peep here and a peep there, and St. Peter's keeps watch and ward over all. You pass the place where Keats sleeps, you go under the Aqueduct wrinkled, parched and barren like an old woman of centuries who has seen her children and her children's children grow up and pass away, and so into Rome.

" There is a full moon. The Capitol broods in the shadows. It is deserted : the voices and murmurs from the world below do not belong to that up here. Trajan's Pillar seems to be like a sleeper who wakes for a moment to whisper to you something of what he has been dreaming about. Vesta's Temple, cold, grey, lonely by the Tiber tells you (and you can almost hear the sobs) that it keeps nothing now but ashes. Through winding narrow streets smelling of decay and humanity where men and women sit laughing and chaffing in dim and dingy wine shops, I wander. The Palaces on the Palatine are sad shadows up against the sky, and there in front through the Arch of Constantine is the gloomy guilty Colosseum. You have

seen men burdened with sin; here is a building that sits night and day brooding over the evil it has seen. And when the moon is full, time rolls back and the crowd of mad, blood-lusty passions come up from their forgotten graves and yell from the tiers. Like the Wandering Jew, Old Rome awakes in the moonlight, and he who wanders abroad and alone then meets her as though he had had a tryst with her ghost.''[1]

His own country, the Border, Rob Roy's land, the Grampians, call from MacDonald's soul the same musical response that is awakened when he goes East, to Constantinople, to Georgia, to Egypt, to India.

" St. Sofia dominates all. Nearby is the space where the Hippodrome was wiped out for its iniquities; round it are the ruins of the grandeur of the ancient city; beneath it are the foundations of Byzantium with all their undisclosed treasures. Its gates are guarded against the proscribed infidel, and he who passes through is carefully scrutinized; in its courts lounge soldiers, gamesters, loafers, sightseers. Outwardly, it is dishevelled, confused, not a little disappointing. The careless world comes up to its doors—comes up, but does not pass within. Beyond its doors and curtains is an unjarred peace. The world holds no Holy Place like it. St. Peter's is never free from bustle and traffic, and is a disturbing mixture of elevation and vulgarity. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is dark, filthy, stifling. The Pantheon is sadly aged and bereaved, and is dead to the soul. In St. Sofia dwells the Holy Wisdom, silent, unembodied, but *there* in the vast space. Its secret is its free spaciousness. The Church was founded on superstition, and, in the shadows of its pillars and the corners of its niches superstition lurks waiting for the credulous to bring it forth, but it does not walk abroad in the great spaces. In them is nothing that binds you to the earth or to yourself. Truth does not even whisper to you there—it just is. St. Sofia is not an offering of the glad heart revelling in details; it is a dwelling place of pure being. Let the creed which the devotees murmur there be what it may, the temple is the abode of the Eternal, the Unconditioned, the Unknowable.

" When you venture to look at its wonders of marble,

[1] *Forward,* 11th September, 1920.

precious stones and colour, you see, like a hovering shadow through the wash and the inscriptions put on by hands doing homage to Allah and Mohammed, the benignant face and the symbols of Christ put there first of all by hands doing homage to God and His Son. This is indeed St. Sofia. It is a temple of the universal worship, neither church nor mosque, but something embracing both, and more spiritual than both. In Palestine, one has to escape from church and shrine and get out upon the hills of Judea, the road to Jericho, the waysides of Samaria, to feel the Presence. It dwells in St. Sofia."[1]

Severe intellectual honesty and romance seem an odd, an almost inconceivable blend. Yet these inconceivables are the stuff of actual character. Inconsistent, yes, but psychology is not chemistry. You cannot reduce the two elements to one : both are present, in constant interaction, and MacDonald can never be understood save by a recognition of both. The first is the more obvious, perhaps the more important; but it is in the second that the "mystery" of his personality, felt, resented sometimes, misinterpreted constantly, resides. Evidence of the first is supplied daily. His leadership, his actions are facts known to all. True that what is known to all is most apt to be omitted by any particularly interested student; fascinated by his own discovery he forgets that it is to be added to, not substituted for, the general view. But, while recognizing this and re-stating, for the sake of clearness, the truth that MacDonald's mind—with its power, its individuality, its continuity, its honesty—is the major imperative in his

[1] *Nation*, 14th October, 192[illegible].

public and private life, and the most important fact about him, anyone who wants to understand must investigate the bye-path of his romanticism.

It is connected with mystery, and must be. A sense of mystery is a primary element in the romantic apparatus. His descriptions are full of this: of atmosphere, of glamour, of mist, of something which it would be profane to try to penetrate. When he writes with this pen, there is no trace of the analytic spirit. There is a pre-occupation with the external aspect of things, with what they show to the eye, and what they show to the eye at a certain distance. When you get near you are prying, dissecting; you become in fact a miserable realist. That is the implicit suggestion. Psychological or any other analysis is death to romance. Consistently he has very little use for the modern novel: regards Scott as the impeccable model: would place next to him the eighteenth century writers. Most people do not regard the eighteenth century as a romantic period. At the time it was not. But two centuries have interposed a film of beauty: removed it to that distance necessary to give him the right to wonder and admire. Scott is a simpler case, of which more later. The romantic background is obvious, as is the appeal to the historic sense, the broad and simple sweep of his characterization, at least as romantic as his background. MacDonald, with an extremely

strong sense of atmosphere, of situation, nowhere shows any searching interest in character. He loves parallels and repetitions, cares more for uniformities than differences, for types than exceptions. Romantic history is made up of parallels and types; it is an impressionist landscape. To get the atmosphere you must stand away. In any of his own descriptions you will feel him standing away. He stands away from himself and expects others to do the same.

Romance is a vague indefinite generalized thing. It can carry a very considerable ballast of the commonplace, indeed requires it. MacDonald has at times a remarkable power of transforming the commonplace, giving to it just that touch that makes it universal.

"To the I.L.P. this year the land is indeed green with the promise of a coming harvest. It is sometimes, for long stretches of time, very difficult to see evidences that the world changes and that men are really moving onwards. The seeds of progress seem to fall upon men's minds and to be buried, and people go hither and thither whispering and shouting, sometimes as sneering cynics and sometimes as cruel revolutionaries, that nothing is going to happen and that our efforts are to be in vain. They misread events. The powers of mind and will that make great changes have to accumulate, and whilst they are accumulating they are not much in evidence. As waters behind a barrier they rise and rise, and then they come into play.

"To-day is a time of manifestation. We can see now that during our thirty years of propaganda there has been not one lost word or thought. All are now in their place playing their part in the spring-like pageantry of promise of these days. On the walls of some of our homes hang those prints of happy folk in classical draperies bearing bulging banners which Walter Crane used to draw when ideas were in the Spring. They are now the Spring of achievement. They then were symbolical of our own

hearts; now they are symbolical of what is happening in the world. Thus idealism transforms itself into reality, and our generation writes its name in the history of mankind.

"We are still far from an autumn peace, and the toils of spring and summer are by no means over. But the green blade is cheering, and the first flowers are out by the wayside.

"We must not forget one thing, however. The final coming of Socialism is not to be like the arrival of an invading force. It is to be a renewal of life. It is to come like the spring everywhere—in the sky, in the fields, in the woods. Not one voice is to proclaim it, nor one dance, nor one manifestation. Each in its appropriate way is to join in the change. So, not by Parliament alone, nor by one kind of attack in Parliament or out of it, is the transformation to come, but by the complete awakening of everything that quickens to higher and higher endeavour, to more and more truth and beauty. We might well go to where the spring is to be found and, knowing what a mysterious choir of joyful sound and wonderful blend of beauty it is, turn to our own work with the secret of success in our possession—the co-operation and harmony of all the qualities of good directed to universal ends. That is Socialism: that is the significance of May."[1]

To ninety "intellectuals" out of a hundred this is bathos. Ten per cent. of them recognize the fitful universalizing touch which is genius. Again and again in his writing you get this freakish, streaked effect. He takes some quite ordinary image, threadbare with use, and adds something that at once lifts it and sends it straight home. He hardly ever speaks without doing this; hardly ever seems to be aware of what he is doing; probably regards these effects with indifference, would prefer to have some ingenious logical hair-splitting admired. Yet for one person moved by his sheer intelligence, ten are stirred by this wayward, life-giving

[1] *New Leader*, 27th April, 1923.

faculty, this queer romantic strain. It uses conventional symbols, the old well-worn notes—religion, duty, nationality, the fireside and so on: uses them so simply as sometimes to provoke the subtle to contempt. Yet this very conventionality in romance is his link with the vast commonalty which may not understand but does feel it. In grasp and breadth of mind he may be an intellectual; in nature and temperament he is miles away from what is bad as from what is good in that. No analysis can give the sense of this so well as an article written during his visit to Georgia of the Caucasus, at the time when Georgia was still free. It is longish, but worth reproducing as a whole.

"There are days in one's life which dominate the years as a mountain dominates the countryside, and one of these was the day we entered Kazbek. Kazbek is a village far away in the heart of the Caucasus in the midst of a wild district where peace comes as rarely as the myrtle flower, and where, I have been told, is found the best cavalry of the world. Great precipices rise over it, and above them, in monarchial grandeur and sanctity, tower the Kazbek peaks flashing in eternal snow. Below is a rushing river, which cuts away year by year the great morraine deposits left by glaciers of olden time for hardy men to till for grain. The village is so tiny in the midst of the sublime vastness and awfulness that it is like a sparrow sheltering under an eagle's wing. Between the avalanche and the torrent it is one of those bold confidences that amount to an impertinent intrusion of man upon nature.

"But there man has built his habitations, goes forth in the springtime with his patient oxen to plough his fields, and in the autumn sends his children and women-folk with hooks to reap his harvests. On the rocks he has raised his towers of defence and has crowned the lower hills with his churches and belfries. He has adorned the mountains with a band of yellow smoothness running between the bare precipices and the broken torrent beds, and you see his

flocks grazing there in the midst of a Sabbath calm. He himself remains a gay and a gallant spokesman, whose heart is ever ready to welcome the notes of alarm, who lives fully in the daytime and knows no tremor should he meet death suddenly. We found him riotous in the joy of being a free citizen of Georgia once more.

"Long, long is the way thither, and it lies through mile upon mile of mountain road. By hairpin twists and turns it mounts up over precipices. Were your driver to make the slightest mistake, a drop of hundreds of feet would be the end of all your journeyings on this earth. It is, however, a pleasant land of yellow hill-slope grazings, whereon you can see the shepherd herding his sheep, of dark forests, of sudden valleys, which reminded me of the cleuchs on the Moffat road to Tibbie Shiels', only on a scale increased an hundredfold, of frequent villages which seemed to be pegged down in their places so steep are the slopes where they are. Churches and ruined towers on the lower heights give a human note to the grandeur of the road. We made an early start, but ere we had reached the cross marking the summit of the pass and gained a level with peaks which in the morning looked as though they reached to high heaven, the evening lights were upon the hills, the shepherds were drawing together their flocks, the valleys were being flooded by the tides of night, and the moon was up.

"We dashed down into the deep blue darkness. The high mountain-tops with their snow in the evening light and the moonbeams seems to withdraw from the world and to become something of form without substance—to become the mountains of dreamland, perfect in outline and of a sublimity undisturbed by the jars and the hardness of earth. They rose up from the dark, their roots were upon the unseen. One lost all sense of the rattling of the car, of the dust, of the jolting. It was as though we were entering upon a land where human foot had never been and never could fall. Soon we were wakened from our dream.

"Just as the pink was fading from the distant snows and the nearer greys and the greens were being submerged in the rising tides of deep blue, two horsemen wheeled into the middle of the road with a shout that was like a war cry, and proceeded ahead of our car in a wild gallop. One carried a red flag on a spear shaft. As we went down new groups joined, until, before us and behind, there must have been a hundred horsemen, and the valley was filled with riotous shouts and echoes. They rode pell-mell, they passed, they fell behind and galloped ahead; they yelled, the hoofs of their horses clattered, their accoutrements clanked. The road was narrow, and still narrower ridges

were frequent; on one side it fell away steeply to the river; there were heaps of stones all along the edge; it twisted and turned. The moon lit only the high ground and it was pitch dark where we were, nothing but the patch of light from our car enabled us to see a few yards ahead. But the rout of horsemen recked little for all this. They rode like mad; in the space of light they bent down from their saddles when their horses were in full career and picked up stones from the road; they crushed and jostled until it seemed as though they must be overwhelmed in disaster. They sang snatches of song, they shouted, they cheered. The light caught their swords, their faces, the metal on their accoutrements. Over all bobbed the red flag. Down and down we went, the wild torrent gathering in size and boisterousness like a spate on the hills.

"At the villages there were waiting crowds and triumphal arches bearing in different forms salutations to Socialism and the International. We could just see them as we whizzed through, slackening our speed to let the torrent flow with us. At one place we stopped. The crowd blocked the way, speeches had to be made and ceremonies of welcome had to be performed. They gathered round the light of the car, but their borders were hidden in the dark. For the first time we could examine our escort, and the first impression was that we had been captured and made prisoners. Squeezed amongst the horses' legs were children, women and old folks, those who from need or ailment could not bestride a horse—a tatterdemalion crowd with rags mysteriously united into covering and headgear—the prey who flee to the mountains when the alarm is sounded and the troopers are abroad.

"But who can describe the lithe, virile riders who sat on their horses as though horse and man were one, who were never still for a moment, whose faces were like glowing pages telling of many battles, wild slaughter and much else that man does when his blood is hot; many midnight rides, many nerving exploits, the gaiety of whose attitude proclaimed them to be of those who live a merry, reckless life and a romantic one. Some looked like Greek gods with fine-cut faces, others like Bacchanalian dare-devils who would stick you as joyfully as kiss you, others bore their villainy as bare as they held their swords. Some were clad in those long flowing coats with round sheepskin caps, the perfect dress of a handsome man, some were in the ancient attire of their fathers with embroideries and tinsel; at the waists of all were sword and dagger, on their breasts cartridge cases, and some carried small round iron shields. The whole surged with ebullient animation, which could not be controlled when an old greybeard rode up to receive

us into the fellowship of the mountains and to welcome us as men, whose names had gone before them, and who came as the ambassadors of the Socialist International to the new mountain State of Georgia.

"They danced and they sang before us on the roadway—strange, gallant dances, just a little like our own barn dances, but with a barbaric demeanour in them, we clapping our hands in rhythmic time; they fought mimic fights with sword and shield. Higher and higher rose the excitement, the choruses, the shouts. And over all the moon and the snow-clad mountains imperturbable and the fluttering red flag borne on a spear.

"We were still some way from the end of our journey. The horsemen wheeled, shouted, lashed and cleared a lane for us through the crowd. To cries of 'Long live the International' (so I was told) and of goodness knows what else, we went on. Johnnie Armstrong and all the reavers who ever went out on a devil-may-care errand were back again having one more ride in the moonlight. Down the road the rout clattered, but more furiously than before, swords flashing overhead, whips wheeling, hoofs making sparks fly, dust turning the yellow light of the car into a grey-blue. Lights again appeared ahead; a triumphal arch was passed and they bunched up to get through it; white houses came into view, and, dimmer than they, a church on a knoll. The roadway was blocked by a crowd and we drew up, our guard making a wide circle round us. Presently the great bell of the church tolled and we were conducted to the churchyard where from the top of the wall I had to make a speech. Never did Socialist address such an audience, of such looks and such attire; never to the accompaniment of such shouts, such clashing of swords, such clattering of accoutrements, were hot words of freedom and international amity thrown out. The old priest in a long cloak and almost equally long beard read an address couched in the most irreproachable terms of goodwill to men and on earth peace, and we passed to a table groaning with mysterious dishes and piled with bottles, and thence to bed.

"Next day in the gayest and freshest of mornings we went through the most forbidding of gorges of bare, grey rock, which closed in upon us like the road to perdition; on to the Russian frontier, where we were met by an armed guard of Bolshevist soldiers (hated like poison all round here about) who accepted cigarettes but would not allow us to proceed, and the sergeant of the guard knowing us, he sent through us fraternal greetings to the workmen of all the world, which I here and now deliver."[1]

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[1] *Forward*, 23rd October, 1920.

An intellectual in Kazbek would have been compelled to interrogate and puzzle. MacDonald's natural reaction is delighted description. An intellectual is compelled to try and get below the surface of things to their significance. He cannot help being the enemy of every sort of romantic haze. MacDonald, despite a mind at times like chilled steel, loves the romantic haze, which stirs older things in him than his reason. He loves it not only because it is romantic but because it is haze. Here the dualism of his make-up asserts itself. Behind his intellectual realism, his strong sense of fact, there is in him another self which shrinks, as from blasphemy, from the effort to get behind the veil, would be outraged by any suggestion that it is theatrical tulle.

If one tries to probe this too far, one tries to penetrate those arcana of personality which few can explore in themselves; which he, one may hazard, never does explore; is attempting the absurdity of knowing a man better than he knows himself. No sign is given by any of his writings that MacDonald ever indulges in self-analysis. The romantic temper is not self-analytic. Its psychology, like its history, is generalized. Its danger is to collapse into the commonplace; its strength a glorious hold on the common, a deep respect for its fundamental rightness. "I guess," said Abraham Lincoln, "that God must prefer the common people: that is why he made

so many of them." Here MacDonald would surely agree.

This is, no doubt, the foundation of sound social theory and genuinely democratic practice. It helps to lend to an almost mystical sense of the life of the community an accent which connects it with the deeper religious emotions that most people can only touch to vulgarize. This religious sense is an undercurrent in the dryest of his social writing; it rises to the surface when he takes up his "good" pen.

When he says of Hardie that he had a "listening awe in his soul" he is describing the sense frequently given to his audiences by himself. His mind is doubtless emancipated from all that is dead in dogma, but with what is living in the religious impulse, in whatever form it speaks, he is in intimate touch. This touch is homely, not exalted. It is in fact sincere. He does not need to go to the hill-tops to get it; it speaks to him constantly. Reverence—that note so devastatingly absent from modern literature—is in the marrow of his bones. Implicit everywhere, it is explicit hardly anywhere. Audiences feel rather than hear it. It is an atmosphere, not a phrase: the substance of motive, not the embroidery of rhetoric. It is the last thing anyone could ever get him to talk about; to be told he had a mystical strain would probably annoy him profoundly. Yet it is

there; it is fundamental. It is the basis of the patience of a temperamentally impatient man, of the fortitude of a highly nervous organization, of the reserve of a great orator, of the solitariness of the centre of crowds. "Here we have no abiding city." That is a feeling deeper and older than any formulated and connected belief. "The world is old, and we are like dreams in it," says the poet of the Georgian epic. MacDonald is a born fighter: yet he would agree. Rational belief in the high destiny of mankind and its ultimate power to achieve a self-mastery flowering into happiness, a determination to go on, whether to victory or defeat—these are moral imperatives of Socialist action, and to Socialist action his whole conscious life has been devoted. Yet behind them, colouring them, with no power to inhibit them, is the brooding melancholy of the Celt.

Always the wonder of the romantic is tinged with a more than half-fearful sadness. He keeps his distance because in some hid corner of his soul he is aware of fear; might not all the beauty vanish if he drew too close? This secret fear, this sense that close interrogation will betray the heart, is latent in all romantic writing: never far below the surface in MacDonald's. It explains the hatred of what is called "psychological analysis" and "sordid realism," as why, so often, this type of

melancholy is crossed with a peculiar appreciation of the more superficial forms of humour, above all of the humour that is verbal, of wit, sarcasm, and ironic comedy. They are forms of escape: represent a rush, if a graceful and dignified rush, for safety.

In his case, if he looks at groups, feels and theorizes about groups, but holds aloof from individuals, the explanation is partly his romanticism, partly that he gets in his own way. He is too much of an individual himself to be greatly interested in the individualities of other people. If his individuality were self-conscious it would actually be less of a barrier; if he were really, as he is often said to be, self-seeking, self-assertive, concerned about personal ends. Because it is unconscious and operates without his thinking about it, he disregards, fails to understand what is happening inside other people, shows a very imperfect power of managing them. He is an egotist, subject to curious limitation. He is self-centred, rather than selfish. To put the contrast in a crude and extreme form, one may say that the selfish man disregards the feelings of other people in order to satisfy his own, whereas to the self-centred man it does not occur that other people have feelings. MacDonald analyses them no more than he analyses himself. He simply acts as seems natural to him at the moment.

This has a curious result. Though a solitary, he is not a lonely figure. Does that sound like a distinction without a difference? It is not. Loneliness is a subjective, solitariness an objective state. MacDonald is thoroughly objective. If you do not get this impression from his writing, you miss its most salient trait. No charm in social interchange can mask the clarity with which it speaks between his written lines. Between objectivity and romanticism there is only an antithesis when each is assumed to be complete. Real individuals are not, like the characters in Joanna Baillie's forgotten tragedies, the vehicles of single determinant and perfect traits; in every man there is a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde, who cannot be separated one from the other, whose confused interaction creates personality. The complex cannot be reduced to a catalogue of the elements that compose it. MacDonald is both objective and romantic.

So much his writings show. If the effort to correct this impression by that made by personal intercourse discloses a further paradox, that too has to be taken in.

THE SECRET OF THE SCOT

" Silence is a hard virtue, for no one can see us practise it."

Moltke.

AT the Labour Party Conference in London this summer MacDonald, to quote one of the press correspondents, " roused himself to a scornful and sarcastic attack " on a speech which he described as " a very good specimen of meaningless, heroic words." In this he was not merely denouncing an attitude detestable to his intellect but expressing a side of himself in which lies the key to much that puzzles both opponents and supporters. The particular case illustrated well enough a common weakness of Labour gatherings. A long declamatory resolution, supported in a speech of the same kind, demanded a " determined " protest to " awaken the public conscience to crimes committed by the British Government against the subject races " and so on. " Is the ' determined protest,' " cried MacDonald, " to be the kind of thing we have listened to? If so, if this is all we can do, oppression and militarism will last till the day

of doom." In a few sentences he referred to some of the practical things that the Labour Party in the House of Commons had done for oppressed races and then, with a stinging candour, suggested to Barrow (whence the mover and the resolution came) that the "demonstration of verbal heroics" in the conference was a salve to the conscience of the Barrow Labour Party for its electoral failure in a predominantly working-class constituency.

It happened that the same week had seen the suspension of the four Glasgow members. But his denunciation of heroic words did not require that particular demonstration of heroism to call it forth. It represents a constant and significant strain in his thought and action. Again and again he has inveighed against the tendency to regard words as deeds, to prefer striking an attitude to settling down to work. This tendency is the besetting sin of members of advanced parties. A good part of the temporary conversions to Communism in this country are to be explained by it. To expand your lungs and lose your head is taken as a sign of sincere passion, even by those who remember the superior performance in this line of Horatio Bottomley. To MacDonald such passion seems at best childish, at worst insincere.

He has assailed it again and again, both humorously and seriously: with good-natured

raillery and with scathing contempt. It strikes him as silly, as the mock heroics that belong to nursery politics, and as such he laughs at it.

"The Communist is a politician in crinolines and cork-screw curls. The common people in history have been working through violence into politics, and now that they have got there I am in too great a hurry to go back. I know that ancient times had their attractions—the Spartacus revolt, Wat Tyler, John Ball, Oliver Cromwell—that the French Revolution is inspiring in spite of its dirt, and the Commune heroic in spite of its squabbles and its failure before the Versailles troops came in to murder it. I prefer to read about them rather than to repeat them, and to use the powers they have given us rather than neglect them. The disfranchised revolted during the past two centuries in order that their offspring might not have to revolt any more but govern. I, being a modern creature, believe in Government rather than revolution or dictatorships. My friend, you really belong to that class of worthy but odd people who prefer an uncomfortable chair because it was made in Queen Anne's time to a comfortable one made in the time of our own George. You say you are on the Left of the battle. You may be, but your manual of tactics is that used at Culloden. Why should you want to re-write history? My ambition is to write it.

. . . .

"No, whatever you do, do not continue to harbour the delusion that you are the modern man of energy, that you are the heir of the ages, that you are the man who is to stand no humbug, that you run when others crawl, that you value time. You are only the long-dead mail-clad warrior come to life to scare the hearts of the dear people who look into milliners' shops in Piccadilly or in Regent Street of an afternoon. I am fond of you, and I like the romance that glows in your heart. But you belong to an historical pageant, not to politics."[1]

In a vivid and amusing "Glimpse at the French Chamber" written in April, 1923, he described "the logical and inevitable result of discussions by interruption, and the evolution of a body too lacking in self-restraint to listen to

[1] *The Venturer*, January, 1921.

another side. It was a spectacle as humiliating as it was ineffective. It gave one an understanding of the queer problem of why the French Chamber can pursue impossibilities, after they are proved to be impossible. When legislators put demonstration and vociferation first, they soon cease to be honest."

"There begin rattling volleys of short, sharp, crackling interruptions, like Lewis guns. The Centre and Right show mass agitation, for it is a Socialist who speaks. The Left claps its hands: the Right throws up its arms. There is great emotion and two bearded gentlemen are specially affected. It is like a revival meeting, where sinner after sinner rises impelled by a sense of sin, to testify to the spirit moving in him. When he starts there is a hush; as he proceeds he fires others. The bell clangs and the fire dies down to smouldering.

"The speaker goes on doggedly through his bundle of notes. The gentlemen who are like gunpowder have gone off so often that they seem to have no more 'go off' in them. They gesticulate in dumb despair. But the fire is going lower and the less inflammable material is becoming hot. A professional, respectable-looking gentleman rises and yells, recollects himself, tones down, shouts with an attempt to be dignified, looks round, puts his hands in his pockets, feels he has done his duty and sits down to receive the approval of his neighbours. By and by he is up again, and his passion having gone through exactly the same phases, his hands seek his pockets and he sits down. So it goes on till midnight, when it is closured and I go away. (I heard that the closure was carried, but that the debate and the scenes were immediately resumed.)"[1]

His dislike of noise, of demonstration, of gesture, of phrases is what one would expect from a political realist, interested in the substance rather than the show of achievement, concerned to get things done rather than to be

[1] *Forward*, 14th April, 1923.

seen as doing them, as from a man who has always resolutely put aside the temptation of the short cut to tread the long road.

But there is another side to the general case. His dislike of heroics and the heroic attitude covers more than the meaningless verbal sort: reaches a point, indeed, which explains much of the criticism passed upon him. He will not assume the heroic position even when he is performing a heroic action, suggests indeed that there are no such actions. A man does his duty. Enough said. To acclaim or advertise it is rather to insult than praise him. There were men who felt resistance to war-passion heroic, in him and in themselves. MacDonald, it is pretty certain, never did. He did what he had to do. That was all. Refusal to see himself as heroic might, of course, be allowed to pass. But he extends the refusal to other people whose views are less austere, and they do not like it. His conception of political fighting is governed by the same restrained truthfulness, the same economy of expressed enthusiasm.

There is, behind, an energy which has never relaxed, a patience that nothing can tire. But these things belong to a slow combustion coal which may warm but does not illuminate the immediate atmosphere. Nothing will induce him to present the struggle to achieve Socialism as a heroic adventure. It is not an adventure:

it is an evolutionary process. He might say of it, as Millet said of art, " It is not a pleasure trip : it is a battle, a mill that grinds "—and would take the second simile as more accurate than the first. The note of challenge is seldom sounded in the House of Commons. He is reasonable, persuasive, firm, but never heroic. Heroism grinds no mill : heroism belongs to Don Quixotes.

This refusal to sound the heroic note baffles and depresses some of his followers. They attribute it to all sorts of reasons—to want of courage, to a division of aim, to a lack of the divine spark of leadership; their disquiet is increased by a sense that the refusal is wilful, since MacDonald on the big platform can show all the qualities they miss.

In part it certainly is wilful. It is the expression of his intellectual honesty. He will not say one thing in public, another in private. He will not allow one lobe of his brain to disregard what the other lobe is doing. He will not look at the moment as though it were eternity. He will neither present himself nor his party nor Socialism in a light in which he does not believe. They are all good : none perfect. If he has to choose between understating and overstating, he will understate. Add to this a strong distaste for the obvious, and the oratorical apparatus is seriously diminished. The amazing thing,

really, is that he gets the effects he does, subject to such rigid, self-imposed limitations. They exclude anything that could be labelled as heroic.

So much for the wilful aspect. The other is more interesting and hardly less important. Its explanation is a trait which seems to be missed mainly because critics will be ingenious, and ingenuity nine times out of ten leaves out the obvious. It is shyness. Simple shyness, not any deep intention, is the explanation of half the suspicion that attaches to him, as of the "mystery" that bars him from close approach by his fellows. It does not cover everything, no explanation does; but it covers a great deal that no other explanation will.

Concrete evidence is, of course, not easy to produce. But when he had been leader of the Opposition for some months he arrived at a hall at which he had been expected to speak, although a message had been received explaining that it was to be impossible for him to get away from the House. The audience was assembled and dancing or singing going on—the occasion was one of those social gatherings, with speeches interspersed, which are among the minor trials of democratic movements. In the speakers' ante-room various people were talking, waiting for another star. The chairman was invisible. MacDonald was given to understand that speeches

would not come on for another half-hour. Instead of walking on to the platform, where his appearance would have been hailed with vociferous enthusiasm and a delighted suspension of whatever was going on at the time, he departed. None of those in charge knew that he had ever been there. His departure was due to nothing but shyness : a shyness which most people would regard as incredible in a man of his reputation. Their incredulousness is mere want of imagination and of recollection. From Demosthenes and Cicero downwards the great speakers have suffered agonies of shyness. Some of those who have taken the chair for him must have remarked that, although in general not at all fussy, he is apt to appear so in his insistence on exact punctuality in starting a meeting. How many of them have guessed at the true reason for this? How many would believe that he once said that he has never faced a crowd yet of which he was not frightened? Yet it is true. Beneath a self-control which allows nothing of what he feels to be discerned, there is the shyness, the nervousness of the novice. To realize this is to understand, more truly than could otherwise be done, the courage he showed, not only on great occasions but on small, throughout the war. It is also to understand part of the secret of his quality as a speaker. Did not Sarah Bernhardt say that an actor who was incapable of fright was incapable

of the highest histrionic effect? Unless you can fail you cannot succeed.

Even more common are the instances of men who are shy in private although they seem perfectly at home in public. MacDonald's shyness is fundamentally of this private sort. Do not forget, however, to make proper allowance for the power of his appearance to hide it from the observer. On the one hand his good looks give an apparent aplomb which a life passed in the main in public has assisted. On the other, one of those common conventions, by which perception is impeded, expects the plain and physically awkward to be shy, attributes self-assurance and ease in intercourse to the graceful. More often than not it goes on to assume that this grace is in itself a sign of freedom in communication.

When it is said that, in private, he is shy, what is meant is that a curious inhibition prevents his showing himself. The word " reticence " might seem more apt here, but reticence is a result of which shyness is the cause. It is after all a peculiarity that, like the romanticism with which it is closely connected, he shares with a large section of his fellow-countrymen. All Scotsmen are not shy : certainly the Clyde breed is in this respect very different from the Aberdonian or the Highlander. But the representative Scot is at once shy and romantic. The romantic view

is, indeed, essentially shy; certain reserves, certain veils, a certain standing away, are necessary to it; it will not, cannot, must not probe or expose. Despite its apparent expressiveness it represents in literature the shy man's finding of a voice.

Ask any friend of MacDonald's whether he ever tells him anything about himself; whether, in the ordinary sense, he is ever intimate. Only those who measure intimacy by their own communications claim it with him. Search his writings for personal revelation. You can get at it only quite indirectly. Consider whether it is an accident that he says less in his writings than almost any other prominent Socialist, about the fundamental belief in equality which is the root of Socialist morals. Of course it is neither an accident nor an indication that he does not, in point of fact, believe in or care about equality. The explanation is the precise opposite. He cares too much to mention it. Does not a belief in equality belong to those deep things of which a decent man does not talk? To a Scot assuredly it does. To him a sense of the dignity and equality of man is native. "A man's a man for a' that." The emphasis is on man, not on "a' that." "A' that" is neither here nor there. It is not a thing to talk about. To be proud is as tasteless as to be ashamed. Manifestations of equalitarianism are like protestations of affection

for your mother. The idea of such a display makes a self-respecting man blush. Shyness precludes anything of the sort.

What puzzles people, however, is the fact that private shyness is no bar to public expressiveness. Puzzling or no, the combination is again almost a national law. In private MacDonald is shy : as shy as Carlyle, as inexpressive, and with the same sort of shyness. There are things that neither of these Scots could say—except from the house-tops. Carlyle shouted his inmost feelings, his inmost thoughts, in "Sartor," in "Past and Present," in "Heroes," in his "Reminiscences." He said little or nothing to Mrs. Carlyle. Froude, not being a Scot, never understood this.

MacDonald, on the platform, can stir the whole gamut of feelings : meet him and he is as secret as an oyster. His secretiveness is not silent; real silence is a dangerous form of self-revelation; but it covers most of the personal things an interlocutor would like to hear. Has anyone ever surprised any kind of intimate confession of faith, in an unguarded or expansive moment? None such is on record. He is never unguarded, except on the platform. Off it, he is interesting, but never personal. His conversation is self-centred, but unrevealing. He tells you long stories of what he has done and what he has said, but of what he thought or felt nothing comes

through. The auditor sees and hears what he might have seen and heard if he had been there as an outsider: no more. Of what goes on inside, of his own reactions, his own reflections, nothing. It is all objective. Of the surface of things, including his own part in them, he gives a vivid impression, but any personal colour has to be supplied imaginatively. As to his feelings only a probably quite misleading guess can be made. Anyone who wants to know what he feels must go and hear him at a meeting, the bigger the better. The more public the occasion the freer seems his communication. The platform is his confessional, the crowd his priest; it is there that the impulses that move him speak, and only there. His colleagues probably misunderstand, the millions who shout and sing after a speech certainly understand the ultimate beliefs that make him go. On the platform his personality, his face, his voice, suggest the heroic aspect of politics, even when he hesitates to strike that note. The whole man, the hidden depths as well as the open surfaces, then come into play, whether he will or no. Logic and vision speak with one commanding voice. Shyness is annihilated. If he spoke more eloquently, more directly in the House of Commons in 1914 than he has often done in 1923 it must have been because in 1914-1918 the sense of hostility there acted as a sort of release. Now he is more or less among friends—

and among friends, unless they are numbered by thousands, he is shy.

In the given case this shyness is the more serious because of the way in which it interacts upon two other marked characteristics: unself-consciousness and continuity of purpose. Were MacDonald self-conscious he might by now have discovered how his grudging secretiveness about his feelings affects other people. Since, however, he takes himself and his effects for granted he makes no such discovery. The whole thing belongs to that region which he never examines. That is the first point. The second is more curious. To an unusual extent a dominating purpose or idea has, with him, entered organically into his being. His Socialism is as much a part of him as his blood. That is to say his intellectual processes and convictions operate almost instinctively: they are assimilated to feelings. The result is that they are subjected to the inhibitions which his shyness imposes on the expression of feeling. There is a very considerable area of thought which he is no more prepared to produce for the inspection of a friend, follower or colleague than he is prepared to produce his emotions. On the platform, yes. Nowhere else. There and only there can you get a clear statement of the lines on which his mind is working, a definite and personal expression of opinion. It is not, in ordinary intercourse, that he is trying

to conceal anything, but that it does not occur to him to express it. His shyness has invented for him a form of conversation of a peculiarly uncommunicative kind. Since he has three times as much natural vitality as most people he is pretty certain to dominate any company in which he finds himself. It is exceedingly hard for anyone else to get in behind the screen of descriptive, external talk which he throws up, the harder that he is an uncommonly good and lively raconteur. Thus while he is personally incapable of proffering anything except on the demand of someone else's direct question, he prevents that question from being put. Not intentionally, but because he creates a conversational obstruction.

People say that they do not know where he is, that he does not put his cards on the table, that he has something up his sleeve. The last remark is an illicit inference from the first two. There is nothing in it. It is only an indication of how his shyness has affected them.

This shyness covers a wide range of personal relations. It is surely the explanation of his difficulty in conveying to those who work for him any appreciation of their services. "All for the cause." He no doubt applies that, severely, to himself. Apparently he also applies it to others—to those weaker spirits to whom a word of expressed thanks can make the whole difference.

Admiration keeps them going, and selfless devotion is freely given, but now and again one gets the sense that mingled with it there is an element of disappointment.

This incapacity to thank is not ingratitude. It is, again, an incapacity of expression. With people whom he hardly knows, who make no distant claim to enter into any sort of personal relation, he has an easy graciousness which irresistibly attracts. Wholly devoid of the airs of the great man, he remembers them and their affairs, gives them his undivided attention, talks to them with apparent unreserve of whatever happens to be on the surface of his mind, shows them more frankness than his friends. The nearer a friend might be supposed to be, the further off does he hold him. In the same way he is extraordinarily conscientious about answering letters and keeping appointments, in inverse ratio to the personal claim made in either. He might seem to neglect his friends; never his acquaintances. He has an immense number of affectionate acquaintances; whether he has any real friends depends on the definition of friendship. In so far as it is an equal relation in which two persons open themselves to one another, it is doubtful. What prevents it is not any design on his part, still less any ambition, but something at once simpler and more complicated—shyness.

One says "shyness," not reserve, for reserve implies intention and there is nothing intentional in this trait. It is purely instinctive. There is nothing conscious about it. It is an Achilles heel in a leader and in the given case the source of most of the misunderstandings both within his own party and without. It does as much harm with his followers as would any of the secretiveness and tortuosity of which he is accused, much more than would the bad temper which he has not got. Violence can be forgiven, may even become endearing : silence hurts with an awful indiscriminateness the most loyal as well as the least. It creates a veil, behind which strange suspicions grow : things which a word, even a word of human, passionate, unjust anger, would dissipate. There are men who hate him, but they can never tell you why. And the reason is not always, though it is often, jealousy in one of its chameleon disguises. Its origin, nine times out of ten, is some quite unintended slight ; the disappointment of a man who expected thanks or confidence and was sent empty away. He cannot admit, probably does not know, what the injury was from which he suffers : the whole thing takes place in a void. Mr. John Butler Yeats' profound saying, "When a belief rests upon nothing, you cannot knock away its foundations," has a direfully wide application. Silence is a dangerous medium for human relations, and the

silence of a man who possesses the tongues of angels is more wounding than spears.

The wound is not mitigated, it is exasperated rather by the charm which its author possesses. It is as though a man with every appearance of delighted welcome led you through his garden, and when he reached the door of his house shut it in your face. Anyone, everyone, may come into the garden : the hedges are low, you can see over them, admire the flowers, inhale their fragrance : but what everybody can see is not enough. The attraction of the garden is merely a preparation for the private beauty of the house. And the house is closed. You are sure that the things in it are as good, nay better, than the promise of the garden : but that is no comfort to the excluded. There is no Bluebeard's closet. No one suspects that. I have never met anyone who suggested that there were secrets in MacDonald's life whose exposure would injure him. Electioneers are compelled to rely exclusively on their imagination, with the most fantastic results. It is the good things he hides, not the bad, that madden his would-be devotees. They feel he is being as unfair to himself as to them, and they cannot understand it. Not understanding they criticize, wildly and vaguely. They know their shots do not hit the mark, but their own discomfort compels them to go on aimlessly shooting. They watch new people coming under the spell,

and wait, with a sort of grin, to see them wither under the cold blast of discouragement that comes, sooner or later, on anyone who thinks he has got near. Old friends, however, learn that an absence of any of the show of affection is a surface only; the reality persists, in a loyalty that neither gives assurances nor asks for them.

This same shyness surely speaks in his literary tastes—in the marked want of sympathy his library showed for any books that could be called psychological or intimate. Scott is his favourite novelist. This is not mere nationalism but the expression of what Goethe called an "elective affinity." Scott is a great novelist, but his greatness is not in his searching delineation of the human heart. The reader does not get near his people; they are never "exposed"; always they remain at what one can imagine MacDonald calling a "decent" or "proper" distance. One is perhaps not being fanciful when one guesses that this is the distance at which he instinctively keeps people. In no writing of his own is there any sign of an interest in character pushed beyond the Scott limit. Perhaps you can only know other people well if you are prepared to allow them to know you well: perhaps you can only want to know them well if you have a longing to communicate, to escape from a spiritual and moral isolation. Whether or no, shyness and

lack of psychological curiosity in the given case go together. The combination accounts for much misunderstanding and, perhaps, for the failure to create and inspire lieutenants. Certainly it accounts, in large degree, for his overwhelmingly strong sense of decorum and exaggerated respect for some unimportant conventions. About important things he is as free, as unconventional as a man can be; but about trifles he can only be called pernickety. No degree of heat would induce him to remove his coat in the House or appear on the Front Bench in a flannel collar, except on a Friday. Mr. Kerensky's kiss would have caused him to blush even more painfully than it did Mr. Henderson, though the publicity of the occasion might have mitigated his embarrassment. To make a scene, even in the days when he was a back bencher, would never have occurred to him.

But this sense of decorum has nothing to do with social values in the commonly accepted sense. The charge of snobbery sometimes levelled against him is quite stupid. If he is friendly with outsiders, even with Tories, it is largely because they are outsiders and therefore represent a relief. Also, he means the distinction he has always drawn between capitalism and capitalists, and when he finds a decent human being, in whatever class or party, he likes him for what he is, not for what he has—or has

not. There is an inverted snobbery in the minds of many excellent people which represents the old Adam in a new disguise. Must a Socialist assert equalitarianism by failing to wash? Was Tolstoi right when he said that because the muzhik had fleas he must cultivate fleas as a recognition that he also had an immortal soul? Intrinsic quality is not guaranteed by a cloth cap any more than by a top hat: uncertainty about the letter "h" is not proof positive of soundness of heart. A philosophy which dare not risk contact with the way the other half lives (whichever half it be) is a feeble reed that had better be broken. For external distinctions MacDonald has a real contempt, and for himself he has refused them all with unvarying firmness and courtesy, and no regrets save for the feelings of the would-be givers; but he is not a Pharisee. His calculus of values is purely and simply human. Social staircases have nothing to do with it. He is as much at home in the two-roomed cottage of a miner or a fisherman as in a palace: as easy, friendly, and generous in recognizing gentlemen in whatever garb they present themselves. There may be danger for some men of Socialist theories in mixing with persons of other parties and different social grades. Not for him. He is too safe to understand the danger.

Among the things that he likes, as his writings

abundantly show, is the rich pictorial quality of variety. He knows its price, in our system, and would not purchase it, at that. But he also recognizes the good there is in any sort of pageantry and enjoys it frankly. His Socialist world as he conceives it will have variety and beauty; will have form and surface as well as moral content; will have history behind it, as well as the expanding future before it. A royal wedding in London, a military review in Georgia, a religious procession in India, a gilded At Home in Burma, a bazaar in Egypt—these things speak to him and he rejoices in them, is stirred by them, without any diminution of the other appeal that speaks in the austere hillside conventicle whose bareness seems to make it the more certainly a home for the spirit, or the pathetic efforts at symbolism of a Socialist May Day. Simple to austerity in his personal tastes and habits, luxury makes no sort of appeal to him except the appeal of beauty. That is often missed: sometimes achieved. Where it is achieved he recognizes it. That is all. The recognition implies no condonation of waste, no respect for money. For the whole money standard he has a sincere contempt. The agent of an American book collector heard that he had, in his library, certain treasures which he desired to acquire. Knowing him to be a poor man he made what he considered a very handsome offer

for the volumes. It was refused. When asked to name the figure he would take MacDonald mentioned a fantastic one, adding, so the story runs, "If you accept that I shall at once add a few thousands more." The collector was astounded and declared, "I have never met anyone who would not sell at a price, until I met you."

In the summer of 1922 he very nearly succeeded in saving a Raeburn Scott from being sold to the United States, and took more trouble about it than he has probably ever taken to acquire any piece of personal property for himself. It was quietly done; his name was not intended to appear; the recompense would have been in the fact that a thing of beauty and a national treasure of peculiar value was saved for the nation. This sense of beauty, the spirit and colour of his Socialism, speaks in his love of music, of song and particularly of Scottish song, of dances, above all the folk dances which express natural joyfulness; and in the keen observation which he takes with him wherever he goes, at home or abroad. The only extraneous element that does enter in is the historical, traditional. Functions for him are weighted with associations and therefore to be respected.

For functions anyhow the Scot in him has a feeling. There is the usual element of accuracy in the traditional jest about the Northerner's

liking for weddings, funerals, and the like. National psychology, like individual, is compounded of paradoxes and that a religious nation should have a marked taste for jokes that are theological, and combine a rejection of forms in worship with a profound love of form, ought not to surprise anyone. Because they are free in spirit, they would say themselves, the Scots are conservative in form. Theoretically MacDonald might feel that the fate of his mortal ashes was indifferent to him, and so it may be; but for a friend he would desire a "decent" funeral, with black ties, wreaths, and an appropriate oration. Over any of those friends whose hearts he breaks by his inveterate silence, by his incapacity to express affection or admit to confidence, he would himself pronounce the most wonderful obituary. Then the imprisoned poetry would come out. Raise the occasion to a function, lift it on to the public ceremonial plane, and the restraints go. Again, the things that cannot be whispered in private may be shouted in public. This is a phenomenon quite normal with Scots. They combine a magnificent power of expression and appeal on the platform, an oratory which is somehow not mere rhetoric, which quite evidently comes from the heart and derives its authority from that, with a singular reticence in private intercourse. No one, except MacDonald, is more unsentimental, shyer, more silent in

private than Smillie; yet he shares his power of letting himself out on the platform.

This is not insincerity. MacDonald, like Smillie, is more himself on the platform than in private. The poetry, the feeling, the philosophy that he can then liberate belong to his essential self. J. A. Hobson once said that the "statesman" does not say what he thinks: he thinks what he says. Of our subject that is not true. No: the explanation is to be sought and found in shyness and in that sense of humour which is connected with shyness and is its shield. In public he can be solemn, can be lofty, can touch the deep notes and the high, can release the bard in him, the sense of beauty and of awe that connects him with the Scottish poets and singers, and can do this without any shamefaced inclination to laugh at himself.

He may not strike the outsider as having much inclination to laugh at himself; certainly, though extremely apt at every form of public banter and most skilful in tearing an opponent's case to tatters by the use of ridicule, he is not at all prone to laugh at the seriousness of other people, provided only that he catches in it the note of sincerity. Yet, for every shy man, laughter, both at himself and at others, is a first line of defence: the most effective bulwark, often, that can be thrown up against the dreaded penetration to the inner fastness. Most of us take refuge in

a smile from a blow that touches us on the quick. The smile may be wry enough to give away the fact that the stroke has gone home; nevertheless, reaction is instinctive. In many forms of humour this same instinct of concealment is operative; in MacDonald's it is a frequent element.

At the same time his humour has another aspect, that might at first appear antithetical to this, since it represents an admission of that deep, constant, almost religious sense, that no one who has heard him can miss, of the disproportion between the great forces of life and the puny human effort to stem and direct them.

This disproportion may be an occasion for tragedy or for comedy, according to the emphasis. Which it is depends not so much on an estimate of the forces as on the importance attached to the particular effort which is one's own. To see one's own failure dispassionately requires a strong mind; a genuine but restrained irony. Too much irony leads to the attitude of the onlooker. The man who is to go on fighting must have some of this sort of humour, not too much. If MacDonald has survived defeat and come through to success it must be because he has enough, not too much. This applies both to big occasions and to small. Certainly the war years afforded a surfeit to anyone with a bitter

sense of comedy of occasions for contempt. His contempt never became rancour. At the same time it was sufficient to enable him to derive a sort of grim enjoyment from such incidents as his solemn expulsion from the Moray Golf Club, as from the antics of some of his ex-colleagues and their elevation to positions of national trust. His sense of tragedy he reserved for the sufferings of other people: his own he regarded with amused detachment, a shrug of the shoulders. This was not only pride; it was a perfectly genuine sense of their relative unimportance. A man without humour would have gone under between 1914 and 1922; a man without humour would have thrown up Labour leadership in despair many times both then and since.

Humour in its broader forms is the compensation of the objectively minded: the happy privilege of the eye that does not probe too deep, the reward of a certain degree of impersonality in outlook. To understand people sympathetically may prevent your laughing at them, though full understanding enables you to laugh with them. MacDonald's humour is of this broad, external kind. It is, on the whole, kindly and tolerant. It has nothing secret about it. His jokes, at any rate, he does not insist upon keeping to himself. Them he is able and willing to share. His sense of fun, in part the expression of an abounding vitality, is simple not

complex. He has natural gaiety: a power of enjoyment and of absorption in the moment. There are wonderful stories of Scots nights at Independent Labour Party conferences, and of speeches from him in the most rollicking vein. He has a quick and intense appreciation of a joke, even when at his own expense, and will repeat it and improve it with delight. He can tell a story with gusto and point, though he is apt to be too long in the process, to take his hearers' intelligence too little for granted and, generally speaking, to be slow off the mark. His jests are neither subtle nor elusive, but his whole-hearted amusement conveys itself and warms the social atmosphere. He likes teasing other people and fooling them; one would not be sure that he does not share the rather cruel taste of his hero Oliver Cromwell for practical jokes. But for all this there are times and seasons: some appropriate, others not.

One is, of course, not entitled to forget that to be a public character is a fact in the mind of the character as well as of the public. A fact, not an occasion for vanity. And it is a fact that of itself sets certain limits to irony. There are luxuries of the humble and obscure which the prominent man of action, the leader, cannot afford. He would not be there if he had them; he has got there by sacrificing them. A sense that your efforts are funny is more retarding than

a sense that they are possibly vain. MacDonald is in his bones a Calvinist. He once explained the difference between his position on the war and that of a distinguished and sincere Anglican. It was in the darkest period of the war, when every man's hand was against him; when stones were thrown at meetings; when the press campaign was at its height; when the House of Commons heard him in icy silence, and Labour Party conferences were only a shade less frigid; and the patriotic visitors to Lossiemouth turned him out of the golf club. He said that whereas the Anglican went on because he believed that the forces of good would prevail in the end, he went on, whether or no. There is something heroic in that Calvinism. It is the spirit that snatches victory from defeat and is in itself bigger than victory or defeat. But it is a spirit that keeps a sense of humour in its place—will not have it all over the place.

It is all very well to worship humour. It is the salt and grace and bitter consolation of existence. But it is not the way to get things done. Humorists do not make leaders. They may be effective skirmishers, but they are always apt to find themselves across the lines, in No Man's Land, if not actually with the enemy. A pervading and uncontrolled sense of humour is an awkward thing. It can be counted upon for nothing except impartiality, and there are times

when impartiality is the devil. It is an unregulated thing, which cannot be confined to proper times and places. Like most big men he is no doubt more attached to his sense of humour than to any other quality; it is certainly there; but fortunately for himself and his party it is not a controlling trait. He is humorous on occasions: on what he feels to be the proper occasions: but his sense of propriety is stronger than his sense of humour. There are men who would sacrifice anything to a joke. Needless to say he is not one of them. In his sense of times and seasons he is nearer to the average Englishman than to the Irishman, to whom nothing is so sacred that it cannot be laughed at, whose fanaticism is a jest to himself, if none the less intense for that, and whose jests, as often as not, are the most intimate form of self-revelation. His jokes are certainly never that; his humour is a way out, not a way in: a form of escape from communication, not a secret side alley to communication. Often he tells you a good story to avoid your questions, and perhaps his own: to keep the conversation off "unsafe" ground.

After all such a resource is a necessity for the man concerned in affairs. He can rely on other people to be tactless, to be inquisitive: to ask the questions they have no right to put and to draw the inferences to which they are not entitled. If he is not to utter unmeaning pomposities, he

must put up some other sort of screen. Just because there is no pomposity either of manner or of mind about him, because he assumes none of the airs of the great, is as simple, unpretentious, approachable to-day as he ever was, he is peculiarly exposed. Against the bore, against the impertinent, against all the tribe of lion hunters and sensation-seekers, he has to protect himself. He tells them a story. Very often it is a much better story than they deserve. Anyone who tries to report his conversation will realize how much of its point depends on the narrator. It is hardly fair to go on to complain that his power of distinguishing between friends and bores is imperfect. A good story is a good story, even if what the listener wanted was something quite different. He must console himself with the knowledge that MacDonald has not the vaguest idea that he wanted anything; that the special qualities of his interlocutor have for him no definition of edge; that he is not what is vaguely called " good at people."

There are shy men and women for whom their incapacity to get into close contact with their fellows is a source of constant discomfort, a discomfort that at times rises to pain, and always aggravates the incapacity. The source of their misery is that they are aware of their own limitations. MacDonald, one may hazard, is not. His powerful and vital individuality blocks his view,

the more effectively that he is so little interested in it. He takes it for granted. He also takes other people for granted. That is not, generally speaking, the best way to know them, though it may be the happiest way to live with them.

WORK AND PLAY

" Whether we are good or bad, it is only a broken and incoherent fragment of our whole personality that even those who are intimate with us, much less the common world, can ever come into contact with."
Morley

"I SHALL find time, Cassius, I shall find time." When all its circumstances are remembered, there is no more moving line in Shakespeare. It might serve as epitaph for, or, at worst, as an appeal for suspended judgment on, any busy man. Hard ever to allow enough for the sheer pressure upon him of things—things that must be done, things that cannot wait. Personal relations must wait; personal happiness, personal sorrow, take a second place. Cassius lay dead, but Brutus, with the responsibility of a commander, might not pause, might not forget the others dependent upon him, to let the tears flow for a friend. Not even though a sharp quarrel, ending in a reconciliation of unmatched tenderness, had brought that friend specially near. "I shall find time"—but now, other claims come crowding in, claims of duty, that take no heed of heartache.

Because everyone pretends to be busy,

nowadays, because the mere external rush and speed of life give a sense of drive to the most vacant existence, it is actually more difficult than it was to allow sufficiently for those who really have no time—no time to be interested, no time to be interesting. A few extraordinarily gifted people somehow manage to hold some part of themselves above, aloof, but with nearly every public character one has to recognize a sort of flattening of the personal edge. This represents a real, though unconscious, sacrifice. It is a sacrifice which the outsider has to admit in the case of MacDonald, amply as his abundant vitality may conceal it from those who only meet him casually. Nature has endowed him with unusual prodigality; he remains unusually interesting; but even he is not so interesting as he might be, if he were not so busy. Start with a disinclination for introspection, or any form of analysis, whether of himself or other people; add to that the excuse, nay the necessity, of wasting no time; and you have a pretty adequate explanation of an imperfect apprehension of the point of view of other people. When all a man's time is claimed by the public, he pays for it, and his friends pay for it, in a diminution of what he has to give to them. Friends are not apt to be just to this. They want to have it both ways. So, no doubt, does the public character. But neither he nor they can have it both ways.

In such a life as MacDonald's, the element of routine is bound to become excessively important. To get through at all, a complicated technique of habits has to be created and observed. There is less and less of that "lost motion" which is the salt of personal intercourse in any of its forms. Above all of conversation. Talk about nothing is the most delightful, and often the most intimate. For that, there is no time. There is always something or other that has got to be talked about. In the same way, there are places that must be gone to, functions that must be attended, books that must be read. The element of choice, of mere personal predilection, is severely curtailed. Everything has to be utilitarian. Fewer and fewer are the things that are done, simply for the pleasure there is in doing them. A man's unconsidered, spontaneous, disconnected preferences and diversions are, often, the most characteristic things about him; they are, at all events, the indications through which character is most clearly revealed to the outsider. For them, assuredly, there is no time.

Here, undoubtedly, is part of the explanation of the sense of disappointment frequently experienced by those who meet "big" men, as of the uncomfortable sense they give that they have become, in some queer, indefinable way, mechanized. They have. It is true. To fit

into the twenty-four hours all that has to be got into them, they have to regard themselves rather as Henry Ford regards his work-people. However powerful the dynamo that drives them, there can be little energy left over for the extraneous and adventitious. Such a life holds few or no "uncounted hours."

MacDonald is an extraordinarily busy man. For years he has worked his powerful machine at top speed. Naturally he is orderly; anyone who is to get through a great deal of work must acquire a certain orderliness of method. The immense amount of work that he achieves, week in, week out, represents a continual sacrifice of the casual and haphazard to the regular and selected. The minutes in his day that are not earmarked are few indeed. He rises early—for years used to be at work at six—and, however late the House has sat, breakfasts with his children before they leave for school. He reads in the Tube that takes him down to Westminster, in the morning; again, coming home at night. Unless there is some sort of meeting or conference—and conferences are incessant in the Labour Movement—he is in his room at the House soon after ten. He is a regular contributor to the *New Leader* and the *Herald*, edits the *Socialist Review*, and writes at least one long article for it every month, in addition to other occasional journalism. When he writes is a

mystery, since week-ends nearly always take him out of London, for meetings of one sort or another. A certain degree of social effort is incumbent upon the Leader of the Opposition. He is naturally sociable, but social life, except of a semi-official character, gets badly squeezed. During the Session there can be practically no time off; very little even for his children.

To them, however, holidays are dedicated. At Christmas and in the late summer he flees north to Lossiemouth. His *Forward* articles, during August and September, used to record glorious tramps and great hill-climbing expeditions there. For years, walking has been his chief recreation. Those who have walked with him probably know the "man himself" better than any who meet him only under the iron discipline of work in town. On moor or hillside he is absolutely at home. Of his own country and of England, in its remoter as well as its more familiar parts, he has a unique knowledge—the knowledge of the man who has walked miles with knapsack and map. As a walker he is untireable, as some of the young and proud who have walked with him have learned to their cost. He leads the party with swift, elastic step, has an exceptionally good bump of locality, aided by long-sighted eyes, and feet that never play him false—result, perhaps, of barefoot boyhood. Always he is sure that his way is the

right way. Often enough, it is, though his assurance at times provokes revolt. As a walker he is certainly domineering, and not unduly tender of the weaker brethren. Absorbed in the business in hand, responsive to all it has of beauty and exhilaration, he is not paying too much heed to his companions. They are, as it were, part of the background. For himself, he seems more interested in the map in one pocket and the book in the other. That book is generally connected with the country—it may be a guide-book or poetry. From it he regales his companions in the brief pauses allowed for rest and refreshment.

Whether in the country or in London, at home or abroad, there is always a book in his pocket. The books a man reads, when one knows enough about them, are as good a finger-post as any to his mind. "Show me a man's library, and I will tell you what manner of man he is." There is much truth in this. Therefore when, the other day, I met a friend of MacDonald's who knows his shelves both in London and in Lossiemouth, I asked him to give me a survey of what they contain. His reply, though rambling and discursive, tells one a good deal.

"It's not easy to make a list," he reported. "Every corner is stuffed with books. He told me that the weight of shelves in his study nearly brought the house down the other day. Modern

houses are not built for libraries—not the houses poor men live in! They're in every other room as well—up to the ceiling in the dining-room. I believe the first pennies he had to spend he spent on a book. He has a secret hankering after nice editions; would like his beloved eighteenth century all clothed in fine leather. Old books, of course, are dearer to him than new ones—though he reads the new ones too, at all events if they have anything to do with politics, economics, biography, history. Of course you know science was his first love? Last summer I found him, up at Lossiemouth, reading Arthur Thomson's 'Outlines of Science' aloud to his children and drawing all sorts of new Socialist applications from it. . . . You ought to see him with his young people—it'd give you quite a new light on the man. Never heard him speak of them? Perhaps not—but the things he never speaks about are apt to be the things he feels and thinks most about. . . . He does a lot of reading aloud with them always in the summer—generally at least one Scott, and all the stories of the place. There's not much he doesn't know of Scottish lore, whether it's history or fairy tales or ballads. . . . He has a passion for second-hand catalogues, and second-hand booksellers draw him like magnets, wherever he goes. He could draw you a map of Britain with the fruitful stalls marked. Half an hour in a place,

and he'll have run the bookshop to earth, know what's in it and remember. . . .

"I don't suppose there's a book in his collection he has not read, and it runs into thousands in London, to say nothing of Lossiemouth. He once said to me that if he could afford it he would retire to Lossiemouth, give up politics and devote himself to collecting and arranging a really perfect eighteenth century library there. Of course he'd never manage to limit it to that period, he's far too many-sided. There's the life of Knox he means to write. Knox and Bolingbroke are a queer pair of pets for a man, aren't they? Then there's Oliver Cromwell. On his study walls there are more portraits of him than I ever knew existed, though he was a hero of mine too, once; some quite rare things among them. That doesn't prevent his knowing Clarendon backwards too.

"But you wanted some sort of survey. Well, in every room there are rows of history and biography. Scottish first, then British, then Continental—mostly in English. French here and there. He reads French though he can't speak it. Among the English, the Civil Wars and the eighteenth century get a specially good show. There's the whole of Bolingbroke—you can work out why he's so fond of him: it's beyond me—and Burke and Steele and Addison and Pope and Dryden, Cowley, and so on.

And the Spectator and the other Essayists: Horace Walpole and Chesterfield. Gibbon, of course. My eye was struck by a lovely edition of Sir Thomas Browne: he's a favourite. Classical histories, histories of all sorts and all places: Bohemia, Georgia, India (a big Indian row, or rather, rows), Russia, the United States, Egypt, and so on, as well as the 'straight' histories you'd expect; and all kinds of amusing historical bypaths and sidelights and the originals historians base themselves on. Big constitutional tomes in plenty, but the human side of things more strongly represented than what I'd call the statistical. He's ever so thorough, but never dry. . . . Scotland gets rather more than its share of space perhaps you'd say: my eye ran along shelf after shelf of Scottish literature and song, legend and story—Burns, Scott, Hogg, Ferguson, Allan Ramsay (he claims some sort of clanship with Allan Ramsay, I believe: told me once had been on a pilgrimage to Leadhills to look for his house; I suppose he can read him, I never could), Tannahill and all sorts of fellows I'd never heard of—Thom, Wilson, and so on. Scottish philosophy, too, and theology: Hume, Reid, Dugald Stewart and Sir William Hamilton, and Edward Caird, and so on, cheek by jowl with Mill, Bentham, Hobbes, Locke, Maine, and so on, running up to a long row of the Inter-

national Theological library with Newman, Manning, F. W. Robertson and Co. beyond. Complete works of old Knox—he's read every line of them. Not so long before the election he startled the folk of his South Wales constituency by choosing to speak on Knox instead of on politics. His agent was awfully fussed : but he knew his chapels better than his agent did. I don't suppose he was thinking of them : Knox just happened to be on the top of his mind. Anyhow he thrilled Aberavon with him. You should try to draw him on Knox's ideas of education. He has, I believe, for long had the project of writing a serious Life of Knox, and almost hoped, at one time, that he was to be released from politics, in order to get on with it. However, as a Unionist M.P., and a very distinguished one at that, said at the time when he was talking of this, in 1918 or thereabouts, 'We cannot get on without you.' The release is not likely to come now.

"Then there's John Morley. A long row of him. As man and writer, he's been one of the big influences in his life. He has a profound admiration for him, and a great friendship. I believe that, all through the war, and after, there was hardly a Sunday when, if in London, he didn't go out from Hampstead to Wimbledon for a talk with Morley. Even since he's been leader, he has made time to see him, when he

could make time for nothing else. There are lots of things they don't entirely agree about, but there's a deep natural sympathy between them, a strong mutual admiration and affection. Morley, I know, has always had the very highest opinion of him, been sure he was to make a big mark. You would notice that J.R.M. ended his speech in the Socialist Debate with a quotation from Morley. That was very characteristic of his feeling about him. . . . The thing I see as allying them is not merely the fact that they have both got remarkable minds, but, what is really more important, that they both stand for principle in politics—and not in a cold way, either. The way Morley felt about Home Rule, for instance—there was passion in it. J.R.M. understood that, as few of his Liberal colleagues can have done. And, whether they talk about it or not, they both feel in what I should call a religious way about politics. . . . Anyhow, you must remember Morley when you are trying to make J.R.M. out. He matters a lot. I should say he came as near to being an intimate friend as anyone, though I dare say they mostly talk about politics and history and books. . . . But he has had a great influence; he is one of the very few people whose counsel J.R.M. would feel worth taking. And his admiration for Morley knows no bounds. . . .

" Socialism and economics you'd expect, and

it's there; orthodox and unorthodox, opponents and exponents: Ricardo and Marx, Marshall and Menger, the early English pamphleteers and the Russian Communists; the Socialist library which he edited, and pretty nearly everything on the subject before or since, and all the sort of outlying stuff that touches it—Huxley, Spencer, Hasbach, and so on. I took a volume down here and there and could see it had been carefully read: slips stuck in to mark important passages: notes on the fly leaf at the end—hardly a scoring in the book itself. . . . I know plenty of Socialists who have nothing but 'useful' books, whose shelves are full of 'ammunition.' He's got that, but a thoroughly comprehensive readable library over and above it. For me he's got too much philosophy and too much India, but take it all over it's a readable and a read collection. A good share of the space is occupied by what one might call general literature—the classics in poetry and prose. He's specially addicted to Milton, I gather, among poets, but Keats, Wordsworth, Byron, and Whitman seem to run him hard—so make what you can out of that. They're all there, anyhow: Arnold, Marvell, Chaucer, Chapman, Shelley, Browning, Francis Thompson, and the rest. I don't think there are any omissions, though I can't remember noticing Swinburne. He showed me once Whitman's own copy of 'Leaves of Grass' which was

given him—a special treasure; and I once heard him read 'When lilacs late in door yard bloomed' and shall never forget it, never. . . . Essays I mentioned; novels too, Richardson, Scott—especially Scott—Sterne, Smollett, Jane Austen, Meredith, Hardy, Dickens, George Eliot, Stevenson, and so on. He likes complete editions. . . .

"Then there's science: I can't tell you much about that except that there's lots of it: anthropology (Golden Bough and so on), human geography, stories and descriptions of places, travel, and a great throng of topographical books. Masses of maps and guide books. He's been pretty nearly everywhere, and wherever he goes, he gets the hang of a place: tracks down its history, works it out on the map, could find his way about, years after, knows all there is to know, sees all there is to see. If you talk of going anywhere he'll get down the map and tell you the best way to go and what to do when you're there. I used to walk with him once, but he's too good for me nowadays. He can lay out most of the younger generation still, and I've been told that if anyone else thinks he's leading at the beginning, he doesn't keep t illusion long. . . . He was a grand man to walk with, if you were up to his standard extraordinary power of throwing the whole of himself into whatever he was doing. Of course if you

thought you knew the way, tried to assert your own view of the map, you were done. But most people soon gave that up."

I was thinking over his books.

"Any modern novels?"

My friend shook his head. "One or two: practically none."

"Henry James? The Russians? French novels?"

He smiled. "I don't think so. An odd volume of Turgenev and Tolstoi. Nothing much after Hardy."

I pondered. "Not much psychology, or belles-lettres? Practically nothing queer? The books the ultra-modern intellectual leaves out: very few of those he takes in."

My friend looked at me. "You seem more interested in what he hasn't got than in what he has," he said, almost reproachfully. "It's the big range of what he has strikes me. Remember, too, he's practically self-educated. He had to discover all that for himself. My father had a fine standard library, but I never read them. They're names to me. They're books to him."

Self-educated: yes, there my friend was right, in another sense than the literal one in which he used the word.

Literally it is true, however. All MacDonald's schooling, such as it was, was over when he was in his teens—and in the latter of

those years it had been mainly self-schooling: reading in the hours when he was free from his tasks as a teacher. He read then, as ever since, voraciously, every book on which he could lay hands. In Lossiemouth the range was wider and richer than in a comparable English fishing village, and all that it had to give both of general insight and local colour was eagerly absorbed. The scientific bent of mind was there, the questioning spirit which takes nothing on assertion. Long afterwards when W. T. Stead, excited by the portent of the new Labour Party, asked its members to tell him what were the books that had helped to make them, he wrote:

"The books that influenced me most were Hugh Miller's, particularly his 'Schools and Schoolmasters.' Also the 'Waverley Novels,' in conjunction with Scottish history, opened out the great world of national life for me, and led me on to politics. But Hugh Miller had more influence upon me than any other."

Books were the tools by which he was to hew his way: they were his university. It was from them in the first instance, then from contact with men, later from travel—such contact and travel never taking the place of reading but supplementing and reinforcing it—that he acquired that broad, general culture which makes the circumstances of his origin seem legendary, and enables him to meet the best equipped and most highly trained minds of his time on an equality.

There is a well-authenticated story to the effect that some fifteen years ago, at a big London dinner-party at which Lord Balfour was a fellow-guest, he was asked what his university had been. He smiled as he answered that it was Cassell's *Popular Educator* and *Science for All*—a reply which gave keen delight to one oldish man present, who had been assistant editor of that work, though it, no doubt, surprised the questioner. His surprise was at any rate less uncomfortable than that of the well-intentioned lady who, during the war, sympathized with her agreeable and well-bred partner at the dinner table for having the same name as that dreadful Member of Parliament, Ramsay MacDonald.

In self-directed education there may be some waste of energy, but when the natural impulse is strong enough to carry through the obstacles that bar the poor lad's way, what is lost in this way is more than compensated for by the personal quality of what is acquired. Much of the reading done by the public school and university trained man is apt to be perfunctory: unwillingly acquired, easily forgotten. But there is a hunger and thirst after knowledge akin to the hunger and thirst after righteousness. Then the hardly won gains are dearly cherished, hoarded, guarded, connected as personal treasure, the gold dug by the miner from the unwilling earth, at the price of sleep and food

and every sort of comfort. The passion that drives the lonely student gives to his mind a tenacity and a grip of a special kind. When MacDonald speaks or writes of books, of history, one feels this peculiar possession, as of something that has entered organically into his make-up. So his books may be seen as representing the history of his mind, as the books of those born to free contact with them might not do.

From this point of view they are certainly very suggestive. The list given by my friend shows a wide ranging curiosity, a thorough-going inquiry into the big departments of human life, with certain interesting limitations. If politics, in G. K. Chesterton's fine phrase, covers how men live, and religion how they die, both are there represented, and the great background of history. The historic sense, the sense of continuity, of development, is specially strong. That one would expect. Socialism in his view is a fulfilment, not a break in tradition. Orthodox economics one would also expect. An honest mind enjoys opposition. . . . So far the shelves suggest a comprehensive embrace of the broader, simpler human diapason, the romantic notes being safeguarded by the Scottish poets and story tellers. It is the collection of a man to whom nothing human is alien, but some human aspects not very interesting. If my friend is, as I believe, an accurate reporter, it is not a very

"modern" collection; one might, but for G. K. Chesterton, call it "Victorian," though it is too personal for that. "General" literature is all right: pure literature, save for the standard poets, does not seem to fare so well: the simply æsthetic appeal to strike only an occasional and uncertain response. Theology is there, but psychology, whether theoretical or applied, fares badly enough. It is the collection of a man of marked intellectual bent but not of what is called—in the cant phrase—an "intellectual." Despite its individuality there is about it a sort of inspired commonplaceness: a "safety," indicated, superficially, by the preponderance of old books.

And yet the moment one says this one is pulled up. Is not the safest, the most conventional line, to be moved by just what is moving your own generation? A conspicuous but quite unself-conscious indifference to the books "of the day," of the moment, is possibly a sign not of conventionality but of freedom. Freedom implies a reliance upon your own taste, your own choice. Of this freedom the shelves described by my informant are eloquent.

One other main and very deep trait they confirm, that profound sense of tradition, of historic connection, of continuous development which is the explanation of the fact that MacDonald is sometimes described, affectionately by

his friends, exasperatedly by his critics, as an old Conservative at heart.

His heart, doubtless, pays tribute to all that is beautiful, all that is moving, all that is living in the inheritance of the past. The forms through which man's spirit of reverence and of service have expressed themselves have his acknowledgment. He respects all the decorums —the forms of Parliament, its rites and ceremonies, its quaint and, to some, absurd and unmeaning ritual; the forms of religious worship; the forms of social usage. He respects them, he feels their almost pathetic significance, links as they are with so much of passionate feeling and struggle in the past. So to respect them gives him a sort of melancholy pleasure. More than that, he recognizes, and pays homage to, what they mean to others. Unwilling as he always is to hurt anyone's feelings, strongly as he stands for "decency" in human association, he would rather be misunderstood, if that be the price, than trample on the corns of others. This tenderness for the conventions of others is often interpreted as a conventionality from which he is wholly free.

In his intellectual processes there is nothing conventional, nothing conservative, and his intellect never lets go the tiller. He is far more "advanced" than those whose notion of Socialism expresses itself in a contempt for forms

and ceremonies, a trampling on the symbols dear to the sentimentalism of others, an intolerance of views different from their own. His hold on his own ideas is so strong and clear that he can risk being misunderstood, almost seems to enjoy it: can allow himself the luxury of a sigh over the forms and pageantries of a passing order, heedless of the fact that the sigh will be regarded as a secret desire for their maintenance.

Conservatism, anyhow, is a word, until one has defined what is the thing conserved. There are forms, there are even ceremonies, that he would conserve, because in them the history of the race, its old struggles and undefeated hopes, are recorded. But history, in his view, is a progressive not a static thing. A free mind can use old formulæ which imprison a rigid one. The very firmness of his hold on idea enables, nay, entices him to perceive and present it in some outworn, some shabby garment in which it is disguised from those who cannot penetrate below the surface. To do strong things in a quiet way, new things in an old way, revolutionary things in a constitutional way, appeals to him. It pleases his taste, as much as to do small things in a loud way, temporary things in a showy way, offends it. New wine has for him a superior flavour out of an old bottle.

The greatest things in art have been done by men who preserved all that is beautiful in a

traditional form, while expressing through it a transforming content. This is the sort of thing he wants to do in politics. The desire for it is not merely intellectual. It is also, as has just been suggested, the satisfaction of a personal taste. So, as essential elements in this sort of sentimental Conservatism of his, one finds his romanticism and his shyness blended together. In the substance of his views there is nothing conservative. There he is at once free and essentially unconventional. But this very freedom, this very unconventionality, makes him enjoy the fine patina which time has deposited on the surface of certain forms. He loves them, as he loves the eighteenth century writers. Do they not, after all, these forms, represent an element in life that will always have its value? The element of beauty, of grace, which may be attached to its smallest, most routine actions, if only they are perfectly done? Such achieved grace of form one may, surely, conceive as redeeming, in a finely organized communal life, many services now regarded as mean and as distasteful. So, there is a conservatism that belongs to the Socialist ideal. It can, perhaps, only be perceived by those whose Socialist convictions are organic, not superimposed. It belongs, in MacDonald's case, to the artist, oddly doubled with the scientist in him.

This artist, flitting in and out, uncertain, never to be counted upon, never to be counted off, rising to beauty, dropping to sentimentality in writing and speaking, is a baffling element in his composition. He counts greatly for charm, but also considerably for bewilderment. In MacDonald's orderly make-up he is the least orderly element, the one he probably understands least himself. He has had much less training than any other, conscious or unconscious. Various persons can be seen or guessed at in the course of his career, as helping his scientific bent, encouraging or discouraging this or that special interest, but who noticed the artist? Always, probably, he has been regarded as suspect, and not least by his owner. One can imagine him as being allowed a seat in the corner only because the master of the house has a notion that there should be in it a place for everything.

This neglect has nowise prevented the artist from being important in the development of the man and of the politician, as in the general personal impression they make; but it has encouraged the sense of inconsistency suggested by his intermittent emergence, even while giving to it an accent of unconsidered charm.

The charm is there, nor is it only the expression of an overflowing vitality. Vitality, though attractive to most, may, at times, suggest that its possessor is what we quaintly call inhuman :

that he is a dynamo rather than a man. MacDonald is thoroughly human. About him there is a warmth and glow, something that has variety, spontaneity and uncertainty. He resembles a fire which can crackle, can shine, can splutter, can even smoke upon occasion, rather than a radiator perfectly regulated, splendidly null. If there is a guard up to prevent anyone's coming too near, few feel that it is the creation of conscious or calculating purpose. There is a prominent public man who once conducted a meticulous investigation into his minor personal habits, in relation to his efficiency. He carefully adjusted his diet, and finding that tobacco caused a possible ·05 per cent. reduction in effective power, gave it up. Impossible to imagine MacDonald acting in this way, creature of habits though he is. Ordinarily he is a heavy smoker. Now and then—for instance during elections—he knocks off altogether. But he does not do this on the basis of a diagram. When the close time is over he resumes his pipe. Nor does he hold aloof from intimacies on a theory.

He has his inconsistencies, his foibles, his prejudices, and talks more about them than his continuous underlying views. Consistency is anyhow apt to be a silent, even a secretive trait. A man who is constantly changing his mind has to be extraordinarily definite in statement at each

given moment, lest no one should notice where he is. He must assume an attitude, the more provocative the better, to attract attention. A man whose thought is continuous is under no such obligation. Where he stands at any particular hour can be calculated from his start and his steady, unobtrusive progress. There is nothing about it to strike the casual eye; that is arrested only when he pauses for a moment to pick a flower for his buttonhole or tie up his shoelace. Inevitably the flower and the shoelace are more interesting, at the moment, than the steady walk, though the steady walk is the real business of life. MacDonald's sentimental conservatism is no more than a flower in his buttonhole. He likes its sweet scent and pretty colour. It is not a badge: he has a hearty contempt for badges. To wear it neither affects his pace nor deflects his direction. Those who imagine that it does, he despises, amiably enough. If they make stupid remarks, he will pick another flower. If they proceed to build theories on that, he will grin and murmur:

> " The world is a bundle of hay,
> Mankind are the asses who pull "

—a view quite compatible with a serious and reasoned belief in democracy, provided that a sense of proportion is maintained and the fallacy of simplification avoided.

He cannot be simplified. There is far too

much of him. If he wants to be all things to all men, he is as well endowed as any human being for that singular effort. Whether or no he sees that it excludes at least as much as it includes is another question.

TO-MORROW?

"Ce qui reste vrai, à travers toutes nos misères, à travers toutes les injustices commises ou subies, c'est qu'il faut faire un large credit à la nature humaine, c'est qu'on se condamne à soi-même à ne pas connaître l'humanité si on n'a pas le sens de sa grandeur et le pressentiment de ses destinés incomparables."

Jaurès.

HAMLET, in conversation with Rosenkranz and Guildenstern, suggests to them that if they cannot play upon the recorder, a little pipe in which "there is much music, excellent voice, yet cannot you make it speak," it is, to say the least, a trifle impertinent to imagine that they can play upon him, claim to know his stops, to sound him from the lowest note to the top of his compass. There is warning here for the would-be biographer, and above all for those who must have an opinion about everyone, without taking the trouble to understand him. A complex character is easily dismissed as "ambiguous," not to be trusted, suspect. There are Rosenkranzes and Guildensterns in plenty in the world of politics and journalism, who will dash off a character study of this prominent man or

that with an assurance only equalled by their ignorance, and label anything that their inch rule cannot plumb with some question-begging epithet of sinister suggestiveness.

If the foregoing pages have done anything they have shown that Ramsay MacDonald is no little reed pipe whose music can be extracted by the casual finger, but a rich and complicated organ, mysterious in proportion as it is rich. His character cannot be rendered, to vary the metaphor, in a simple line drawing. It has the sombre glow, the light and shade, the play and colour, the unfathomable depth, the secrets, never fully penetrated, always fascinating, of a fine oil painting. Before it will yield its magic something must be brought to its interpretation in the eye and attention of the observer; and, to the end, it keeps much of its secret to itself. Felt in the act of interrogation, it eludes analysis. Analysis, anyhow, the attempt at separation into elements, cannot give the whole. The elements are there not in collocation but in combination. They act and re-act upon one another. The defects are inseparable from the qualities, the weakness from the strength. The whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Moreover, in the given case, the whole is, to a quite unusual degree, operative as such. It presents itself under very differing aspects, but each of them has the entire personality some-

where behind it. This is perhaps the trait which, above all others, distinguishes men of genius. To any given task, no matter how small, they can bring the whole of themselves. "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might" with them seems instinctively to govern each action. They are never, as are the majority of persons with lesser endowment, at half cock. Of MacDonald that is pre-eminently the case. Almost invariably he is what we call "all there." His objectivity helps him to assemble his resources and to concentrate them. There is no separable part of himself looking at what the rest does with cynical or self-approving detachment. He is not part of the audience of his own play; the play's the thing, and his undivided mind is given to it. Thus, while in his make-up one can detect separate strands—the artistic, the scientific, the romantic, the logical, the mystic—he is not an artist in some actions, a logician in others. Artist and logician, man of science and man of romance, visionary and realist act together, whether he is speaking to a great audience, marshalling his forces in the House of Commons, or walking on the hills. In a curious but definite sense he is more there, more master of the occasion than the others. The divided man may be more interesting to talk to, because he cannot express himself in action, but it is the undivided man

whose expression persists. Interest, in this narrower sense, in personal contact, as distinguished from interest in artistic performance, is almost always the sign of some incompleteness, some division in a man himself, which prevents his getting his personality through. Since this incompleteness, this division, is normal, when it is not present there is, to the normal, some sense of mystery, of a quality for which his own experience presents no analogue.

This quality, in him, has a peculiar accent. His world, like that of most men of commanding personal gifts, is ego-centric. Although it is the play, and not his own part in it, that, in the last resort, matters to him, he cannot really conceive of the play without himself in a principal rôle. It is not that he asserts himself: he is unconscious of the others. They are imperfectly real to him. His sense of reality is a sense of his own reality. His interest in, even his awareness of, the not-self, is, it has been suggested, superficial; the interest of a man concerned to master rather than to comprehend it. This implies something else. To the self-centred individual, however unself-conscious (and the direct correlation generally assumed between self-consciousness and self-centredness is misleading), however objective, one escape is closed. He cannot escape from himself. He may be unaware of the barrier, but it is there. It prevents those

supreme flights of genius which, however brief, open new rifts of sky, make them luminous, to the men and women in the darkness. Can it be said that, even in his highest oratorical efforts, he reaches the supreme notes, high or low? No; they are outside his compass. There is an ignition point he cannot touch. Must not the reason be that he has himself

> "Never felt the fiery glow
> That whirls the spirit from itself away"?

His personality is a unit, but not a unit that can transcend itself. He is "all there." Yes. But could he, if he would, give himself away?

"Every profound spirit," said Nietzsche, "needs a mask." To the profound spirit his profundity automatically provides that mask, not at all because he seeks for it but because he moves naturally through a different level of water, impenetrable because it is deep. Even if he wishes to communicate there is an obstacle in the way of his doing so, in the difference of his experience. It is doubtful, as has been indicated already, whether the desire to communicate is strong in MacDonald. The sense of incompleteness, which is the root of such a desire, is not there. His instinctive withdrawal from inspection, his inarticulate aloofness in personal contact, his incapacity for intimacy, put up screens between him and his fellows: screens that suggest a sort of mystery that has awkward

consequences for a leader of men. Admittedly it limits his power to give to his followers the thrilling sense of shared adventure : prevents the creation of effective lieutenants; accounts for a good deal of disquiet and some suspicion. Even those who do not expect a Highlander to wear his heart upon his sleeve would like more freedom and frankness of approach; are hurt at times, baffled constantly, by being driven back on general public statements of views, and compelled to infer from them the particular line being taken by their chief. An inference is a chilly thing, only to be taken up by the patient, loyal and intelligent attention. Patience is rare, loyalty uncommon, attention not to be counted upon. There are times when they are not forthcoming, when their place is taken by misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

But there is another side to this. The impersonality does make some sore hearts. True that while he has great power of attraction, there is a curious constraint in his response; certain that his understanding of other people, even his desire to understand them, does not strike deep. It is, however, by no means clear that a profound understanding of individuals, a very close contact with them, is an unqualified advantage to a political leader. It has two drawbacks. First it makes exceedingly sharp and perhaps unduly interesting the sense of differences among men;

the things that are not universal, are not shared by all, are not attributes of common humanity. Variation becomes more significant than continuity: sports more fascinating than true types. Second, it involves the observer in the phenomenon observed. To understand a person is to have a kind of responsibility for him, to be caught in the coils of his peculiarities. Incomplete understanding makes detachment possible, keeps the distinction clear between the artist and his material, enables him to use the latter for a wider end. More than that, incomplete understanding acts, as it were, as a veil, assimilating those behind it one to another, obliterating minor differentiations in the major interest of what is shared. The acute psychologist sees individuals, where the politician requires to see human beings, thinks in units where the politician must think in groups: groups that, if his imagination have range and grasp, extend beyond the borders of classes, even of nations, to take in the entire human family as a family. His insight must be sure, but need not be searching. If he can get the main lines right, he is safer in disregarding details. MacDonald's penetration is limited, but it is accurate as far as it goes. His hold on the big general human stops is safe. As a speaker and as a leader his secret is his universalizing touch. He has originality in expression, but the things he expresses in a way of his own are the

things that everyone has felt and seen crudely and vaguely and can, under his guidance, feel and see sharply and clearly. He can get into touch not with one or two of his audience but with all, and carry them along with him. Not into the Empyrean, but on to a path, well above the mists, which will lead men slowly and surely upward. He does not tell them they can fly. That is an illusion. They cannot. He does tell them they can walk erect, instead of grovelling. They can.

Moreover, there is a minor point that has its significance. The exclusion of intimacy implies that he can hardly become the idol or the possession of a clique. There is no obvious group of persons who are "near" to him, in contradistinction to the others who have to keep their distance. If he is, in a certain sense, isolated, he is, at the same time and for the same reason, accessible to all, gentle or simple, important or unimportant, throughout the Socialist movement. He may have a specially tender feeling for the "old folks," the men and women who have given their lives to its service, often in obscure and humble ways. No one resents that. Outside of them there is no sect which can claim special rights and privileges, even the special right of authorized interpretation. No one else can speak for him. He speaks for himself. There is no "inspired" source. If any-

one wants to know what he thinks on this or that, he must ask him, and make the best he can of the answer. If he will take the trouble to remember his general views and not forget that he has a sense of humour, a love of mischief and a delight in mystifying those who like to be mystified, he need not go far astray. But if he tries to get answers out of other people he probably will go wrong. They do not know. MacDonald does not tell them. There are in existence the usual crop of mythical stories about him, of things he has said, things he has done, things he is going to do, whose only source is the abhorrence felt by the gossip for a blank page. Those who believe them have themselves to blame if they are misled. Human enough to understand men in the mass, impersonal enough to keep a firm hold on the general without becoming entangled in the particular, do not his defects combine with his qualities to equip him for political ascendancy?

He is a politician, and that of no accident but by definite and conscious choice. Early scientific predilection represents a sense of method rather than a sense of aim. Had fate allowed him to pursue the path of science, his natural endowment must have coloured his efforts with a human purpose. In our time the natural field for the expression of a human purpose is politics. On the mechanical side, our

period has seen the achievement of mighty conquests over natural forces: it waits still for the translation of those conquests in terms of human release. That is the task to which science called Ramsay MacDonald from the first. Whatever its preliminary stages, in education and discipline, it must have issued in political action.

To call a man a politician is nowadays to put him inferentially in a low moral category. Yet, if we condemn politics and politicians we condemn ourselves: accept the domination of the material over the spiritual, the mechanical over the moral. Any living politician who can be seen as helping to redress the common estimate, to rehabilitate his caste, has done much by that mere fact. MacDonald has already done much. If politics in 1923 wear a rather different face from that which they showed in the previous decade, the result is largely due to him. His actions justify the claim he made the other day that it is the business of the despised politician to "relate human skill and human power to the minds of nations." Politics under our eyes are being lifted from a mere game, a mere scramble for personal notoriety and power, to a struggle whose principles are, as Burke said, those of "morality enlarged," and that largely because a dominating figure in our House of Commons is a man whose distinguishing trait is concentration of intention, a complete permeation of his being by Socialist

thought. If careless observers imagine that he is not a Socialist because he thinks and acts instead of talking as one, that is a paradox too natural to cause surprise.

The man who chooses to be actively concerned with politics, chooses, whether or no with full realization, to live among whirlpools. He may protest his love of quiet, his longing for peaceful untroubled days, but his own will has denied their contact. He has struck out of the tranquil backwaters into the open river, and, as the river widens, it bears him on to the turbulent sea. There disasters threaten always. The most skilful and experienced captain knows that there are squalls against which no seamanship can insure him, storms that may capsize his barque or dash it upon the rocks. To-day, the politician lives more dangerously than he has ever done. The world is in convulsion. No one knows what to-morrow may bring forth, what the reaction of European catastrophe may be inside our island, an island no longer, but part of the heaving Continent. Any statesman called to the helm to-day has to deal with circumstances and forces involving the fate of civilization as we know it. The qualities adequate to achieve a great reputation in quiet times may produce nothing but resounding failure now.

At any time to attempt, in the present, to interrogate the future, to forecast its judgment,

is folly. The standards of later generations are not ours, nor can we do more than guess at them. Idle to wonder about MacDonald, How far will he go? Even to say that, within the next five years, he may be Premier, may lead Labour's first Government, as he now leads its first official Opposition, is to put a question rather than to answer it. To-day, to be Premier, for the leader of any party, is a trial rather than an opportunity. Called to the helm in a maelstrom, all his skill and courage are required to save the ship from foundering. Any party assuming office in the next five years will sink or swim on its handling of European policy, and be called upon to handle it at a stage when opportunities lost and false direction given, by others, face it with imminent catastrophe. True, MacDonald is personally better equipped, in brains and reputation, for dealing with Europe, than any of his British contemporaries. He is, perhaps, the only man who could go straight to the centre of the evil, since he denounced the ideas embodied in the Treaty of Versailles throughout the war; has always taken a definite and rational stand on Reparations; has continuously advocated a policy of reconciliation and reconstruction, and a policy based not upon amiable sentiment, but upon hard fact, faced and understood. He has the reputation abroad which would win confidence for his country. He could bring to the European

Conference table the tact and recognition of the other man's case essential in real politics. At the same time, the situation may have got so bad, if and when the hour sounds when he is called upon to handle it, that it is beyond salvation. Who can say how far the reaction of foreign collapse on our own trade and markets is going to go? how disastrous its effects on the standard of life of our own people are going to be? A Labour Government, born of misery and despair, would be called upon to produce impossibilities by its own supporters. It would have, at the same time, to meet all the terrors, all the recklessness, which a fancied dread of revolution can inspire in the possessing classes—terrors that would be fanned to madness by their press. To-day, there is a continuous effort in the press, and even on the part of speakers and writers who know better, to suggest that MacDonald's own reasonable and intelligent policy, both now and for the future, would be swept aside, were his party to come in, by the headier counsels of some of his followers. To that end, every wild speech, every heedless gesture, by any member of the Labour party, however irresponsible, is written up; it is constantly being suggested that, in the event, the "wild men" will whirl the "intellectual" out of the way. The tail is to wag the dog, as the *Times* said the other day.

As to that issue, there need be no misgiving by any honest mind. In nature, the head wags the tail, and no physiological freak is to happen when a Labour Government takes office. Of course, the quiet and persistent work, upon which MacDonald is engaged, day in, day out, in the House and out of it, of building up a sane and disciplined Labour opinion, a future majority, implies, *pari passu*, the separation, from that majority, of a minority within—but thanks to him, mainly without—the party, that, however small, can be counted upon to be noisy. It is small, but it is also noisy, and, for the hostile press, its noise is precious. But will it, beaten at Conferences and hardly represented in Parliament, give the Government its policy? Of course, it will not. To assume that it can, is to lose all sense of value and proportion, and to forget that the very existence of this section is incidental to the process, which as it proceeds makes it less and less important, of creating an instructed electorate, a body solid enough to resist inflammatory catch-words, from whatever side they may be cast. It is, moreover, to forget MacDonald himself, the last man in the world to be " rushed "; to forget the determination and strength of will which enabled him to stand firm through all the hurricane of the war, to wear down the Communists and keep the Labour ship running on an even keel in

circumstances as treacherous as any likely to arise in the future. He knew then, he knows now, what he is doing. He will advance, but he will never take a leap in the dark, and no man or body of men will induce him to do so.

He knows what he is doing. He wants other people to know what they are doing. With infinite patience, he is prepared to carry on the work of education, of the creation of that opinion, adequate to resist shocks, which will make democracy real, and Labour government a fact and not a simulacrum. Socialism, as he has always conceived it, is a transforming process, carrying further by gradual conscious stages the changes actually, if unconsciously, going on in social and economic organization, which spell hope and fruitful service for all, ruin for none. As this is understood, the dangers of terror-stricken opposition on the one hand, and of illusionist expectation on the other, will be diminished. It will moreover be seen that the policy of co-operation which can save us at home is also the only one that can save us abroad. Facts have compelled us to realize, at a heavy price, that men of expedients and dodges, men who live in and for the moment only, men whose actions have no cohesive force save their own immediate interest, have headed us for the rapids. If our boat is to be saved, we must look to men of an altogether different type. Are not

MacDonald's qualities, after all, the ones that may rescue us, even at the eleventh hour?

Dispassionate inspection of those qualities by public opinion may very well, and that within a measurable distance of time, bring him to power; but those who stop at that point will fall into another unjustified error. His own thinking goes beyond that; the question, How far will he go? must look beyond that. It demands something more than inspection of his mind.

Intellectual honesty is not a simple quality. It implies something more, something far more difficult, than a habit of speaking the truth. To think the truth you must see it all, take it all in, and connect it all. You must include the facts you do not like, as well as those you do; the arguments for despair, as well as those for hope. The inflexible truth-teller often has behind his unqualified assertion of a simple obvious verity a vast blindness to every point of view but his own, every fact save the one on which his eye is riveted. Often he would stand convinced of the commonest form of intellectual dishonesty — stupidity. MacDonald has an architectural mind. That is why it is mysterious, as a cathedral is mysterious. He takes in all the facts and builds with them—for the future. A cathedral rarely rises before the eye of its architect. If he must see his structure in his lifetime he must be content with something

less ambitious. It is for the future that MacDonald's honesty, his grasp of principle and his idealism alike compel him to build. His sense of the future, his responsibility towards it, his firm discounting in its interest of the present, carry with them an indifference to personal success or failure with which most people find it impossible to credit a politician. Of course he does not enjoy failure, though he has shown a remarkable power of enduring through it. Nor is he careless of the opinions of others. He is far too human. But there is something that ultimately matters more. Pain can be felt and nevertheless sustained: temptations can appeal, and nevertheless be resisted. The temptation that would break down his intellectual ramparts can hardly be imagined. Certainly the plaudits that might be secured by the man who tried to introduce Socialism by a *coup de théâtre* would not induce him to attempt an enterprise in which he does not believe.

He is an idealist, to whom ideas are the ultimate reality. Who is now so sure as everyone was once that in his idealism he is not more practical than the self-styled realists who only see the immediate problems under their noses, and are overwhelmed when they bring forth their fruits? His idealism would have made, in 1918, a peace of reconciliation and recovery.

The realists have brought us to the verge of universal chaos. "I believe in peace, rightly or wrongly, and I will never haul down my flag." That applies to revolution as well as to war: against Communist violence, as against Jingo militarism. In the same way there are standards of conduct, of respect for the lives, feelings of others, that are not to be swept aside, trampled upon, in the interest of the exigencies of the moment. Men have got to go on living and serving together, after the moment; no man is entitled to forget the existence of the others. "We are not going to be our own judges, either here or hereafter." The test of immediate action is its usefulness to a future social state, and mutual respect is vital to that future.

All this may seem to militate against immediate success. Immediate success is not what he is out for. He wants to do things, not to have the appearance of doing them. What he cares for is that they should be done. "Time and events will strengthen those who are doing the most loyal service to the world."

Real things are apt to be invisible, except to eyes, like his, orientated to the future. Most of the criticism passed upon him comes from those with a shorter range of vision. Visible revolutions are made by men of one idea, limited men, men who shut one eye, men of arithmetical minds. Invisible revolutions are made by honest

men, men of architectural minds; but they do not get the credit till long after, if at all.

In such an attempt, there is something large, something generous, that compels the note of admiration. As to its success, who can answer? So much depends, for any politician, upon the elements with which he has to work. He is at the mercy of his instruments and of his circumstances. MacDonald has defects that make that mercy a particularly uncertain quantity. There remains the big thing he is trying to do. That will possibly make his place in the future at least as large as it is in the present.

Perhaps it may seem to some readers that, in this final attempted summing-up, the Iconoclast has become an Image-maker rather than an Image-breaker. Such a judgment, however, misconceives his function. It is not to clear the temple, but to clear it of false gods. Indiscriminate smashing serves no purpose. The justification for destroying a false image is that the truth may thereby be allowed to appear. There is an image, accepted by many, to which the label J. Ramsay MacDonald is attached. It is a perversion. The real man has no resemblance to it. Whatever verdict has to be passed, now or in the future, should, for our sakes more than for his, be on what is, not on what is ignorantly imagined. There is an image to be

broken. But the mind abhors a vacuum. A false image can only be substituted by a true one. The breaker is thus compelled to be a builder. In his construction, he may err, both in interpretation and proportion. In the given case, he can at least claim that he has tried to extenuate nothing, to set down naught in malice; to escape from the psychology of images into that of truth.

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